

FAQs for Group Health's transition to Kaiser Permanente

1. What is Group Health's new name under Kaiser?

Group Health Cooperative will now be known as Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Washington (KPWA).

2. Why did the name change?

Kaiser Permanente acquired Group Health Cooperative on February 1, 2017. This means that Group Health is now a part of Kaiser Permanente. The name change is part of the transition as Group Health joins Kaiser.

3. Will my Group Health plan's benefits, monthly premiums, costs, or doctors change?

No. The acquisition does not affect 2017 premiums, benefits, or members' costs. You can continue to rely on the same network of doctors and care teams, and receive care at the same locations and hospitals as you did before the acquisition.

4. With this new acquisition, I no longer want to be enrolled in Group Health (now KPWA). Can I change my health plan?

No. This acquisition does not qualify as a special open enrollment event for you to change health plans. You can only change medical or dental plans during the PEBB Program's annual open enrollment (November 1–30) or if you have a special open enrollment event (see [WAC 182-08-198](#)).

5. Does receiving the new Kaiser Permanente ID card affect my coverage for 2017?

No. Your benefits remain the same.

6. Will my Group Health ID card still be accepted even after new ID cards are issued?

Yes. You can continue to use your Group Health ID card until you receive your new Kaiser Permanente replacement card. Your member number will be the same. You should use your new card with the Kaiser Permanente name after you receive it for all your health care services.

7. Will current Kaiser Permanente subscribers now have access to in-network services at Group Health facilities in the Puget Sound and Spokane areas? Similarly, now that Group Health is part of Kaiser Permanente, do Group Health subscribers have access to in-network services at Kaiser facilities in southwest Washington and Oregon?

No. KPWA (in the Puget Sound and Spokane areas) and Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Northwest (called Kaiser Northwest in southwest Washington and Oregon) do not cover the same service areas. The names may be similar, but the networks are still separate and have not changed with the acquisition and rebranding. You must continue to receive non-emergent services within your current plan's network.

8. Since the facilities will all have the same Kaiser Permanente branding, how do I know which facilities are KPWA and which are Kaiser Northwest? How can I find out which providers and facilities are in-network for my health plan?

Use the online Provider Directory at <https://grouphealth.vitalschoice.com> or contact your plan to find out if a provider or facility is in your plan's network.

9. The information I received said that the website address has changed from www.ghc.org to www.kp.org. Does this mean I should now go to www.kp.org to get information about my Group Health (KPWA) plan?

You can continue to use the websites that you're used to. As changes to Group Health's website are made, you will be redirected to the new website automatically.

10. Who should I contact with questions?

You can email questions to questions@ghc.org or contact Group Health's Customer Service at 1-888-901-4636.

11. What changes can I expect for the 2018 plan year?

As more information is available, you will continue to receive updates from your health plan. The PEBB Program will inform you of changes for the 2018 plan year beginning in October 2017. We will provide information on our website and in the October *For Your Benefit* newsletter.

12. Can you explain why there's a difference in premiums between KPWA plans and Kaiser Northwest plans? For example, KPWA Medicare is \$176.17 per month and Kaiser Northwest's Senior Advantage is \$163.63 per month. Will the premiums continue to be different in 2018?

The current premiums are already agreed upon by contract for the current year, which does not end until midnight on December 31, 2017. KPWA and Kaiser Northwest bargain as two separate entities with premiums determined based on business needs of the entity. Because KPWA has a different business environment, service area, and business needs than Kaiser Northwest, their rates are higher. For the 2018 plan year, premiums will be negotiated again by the two separate entities and will most likely continue to be different.

Additional resources

- [Kaiser Permanente Acquires Group Health Cooperative](#) (Group Health announcement)
- [Acquisition Q&A](#) (Group Health website)
- [Kaiser acquisition announcement](#) (HCA announcement)