



# Living **Healthy**

A newsletter for the members of Central California Alliance for Health



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## **Your behavioral health matters!**

Taking care of your behavioral health is an important part of your total health and wellness. Behavioral health includes mental health and concerns with substance use or challenging behaviors.

It is important to remember that the holidays can be a lonely or stressful time. If you are feeling sad, anxious or depressed or struggling with substance use, you are not alone! We can refer you to resources to help.

## **How to get behavioral health services**

**For mental health or behavioral help**, call Carelon Behavioral Health at **855-765-9700**. This toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**For substance use services**, contact your county's behavioral health department:

- Merced County, **888-334-0163**
- Monterey County, **888-258-6029**

**HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.**

[www.thealliance.health](http://www.thealliance.health)

- Santa Cruz County, **800-952-2335**

For more information and resources, visit [\*\*www.thealliance.health/mentalhealth\*\*](http://www.thealliance.health/mentalhealth).

If you or a family member is struggling or in crisis, **call or text 988**. The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available in English and Spanish.

**If you are having a health emergency, call 911** or go to the nearest emergency room.

### **Alliance members win bikes for being healthier**

The Alliance holds a bike raffle once a year for children and teens whose parents or guardians complete the *Healthy Weight for Life (HWL)* program workshops. The workshops teach parents or guardians how to help their children make lifestyle changes, eat healthy and be more active.

### **HWL bike winner #1—Yoltzin**

Yoltzin's parents learned about nutrition, positive parenting and physical activity from the workshops. A change they made in their household was creating healthier meals and trying new recipes. Yoltzin said she

is very happy she won the bike raffle and plans to ride her bike during their family walks.

### ***HWL bike winner #2—Axel***

The program helped Axel and his family make healthier changes to their lifestyle. For example, they have swapped out sweetened drinks for water and added more fruits and vegetables. They are now more aware of what is being consumed at home. The family plans on exploring areas outside their neighborhood where they can ride their bicycles together.

### ***HWL bike winner #3—Karla***

Karla's mother decided to join the workshops because Karla's doctor had concerns about the child's weight and high cholesterol levels. Karla's mother wanted to learn about nutrition and how she could help reduce her daughter's cholesterol. After completing the workshops, they now practice serving smaller portions, reducing fatty foods and having more fruits and vegetables available at home. Her mother shared that the motivation to continue with these healthy lifestyle changes has improved Karla's cholesterol levels. Karla's mother would like to encourage other parents to join these workshops. She recommends patience, practicing what they learn and staying consistent.

If you would like more information on the *Healthy Weight for Life* workshops, please call the **Alliance Health Education Line at 800-700-3874, ext. 5580.**

## **Wellness for all**

### **Did you know the Alliance offers member workshops?**

The Alliance cares about your health! That's why our health education programs give Alliance members the tools they need to get healthy and stay healthy. There is no cost for Alliance members to join. All member workshops are available in English or Spanish.

***Living Better with Diabetes***—for adult members living with diabetes. The workshops are offered in three different ways:

- Over the phone.
- Virtually (online meetings).
- In person.

***Healthier Living Program***—for adult members living with chronic conditions like asthma, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure or depression. The workshops are offered in three different ways:

- Over the phone.

- Virtually (online meetings).
- In person.

Alliance members who complete all six classes can receive a \$50 Target gift card.

***Weight Watchers Support Program***—for adult members needing help with weight management. This program supports members who join the Weight Watchers (WW) program. Participation in weekly WW meetings is required. Weekly meetings are offered in two different ways:

- Virtually (online meetings).
- In person.

If you would like to sign up for a program or have questions, please call the **Alliance Health Education Line at 800-700-3874, ext. 5580**. If you need language assistance, we have a special telephone line to get an interpreter who speaks your language at no cost to you. For the Hearing or Speech Assistance Line, call **800-735-2929** (TTY: Dial 711).

## **Ask the doctor**

### **Why flu vaccines are important for everyone**

Dr. Diallo is a Medical Director for Central California Alliance for Health with over 15 years of primary care experience.

*With Dr. Dianna Diallo*

Did you know that it's not too late to get your flu vaccine? Most years, flu activity peaks between December and February. To explain more about the flu and the flu vaccine, our doctor answers commonly asked questions.

### **Why do I need a flu vaccine?**

The flu can be a life-threatening illness. Getting the flu vaccine is the best way to stay healthy and not spread the virus to others.

### **Why do I need a flu vaccine every year?**

A person's protection from a flu vaccine is less effective over time, so a vaccine every year is needed for full protection. Flu viruses are also always changing, so flu vaccines are updated each year. The flu vaccine you got last year may not be the right one to protect you for this flu season.

### **Who should get a flu vaccine?**

Everyone 6 months and older can get the flu vaccine. Children who get the flu are at risk of health problems, especially if they are under the age of 2. A flu vaccine is the best way to protect your child from flu-related illness.

If you are pregnant, you have a higher risk of getting very sick from the flu than people who are not pregnant.

Getting the flu vaccine will help protect you and your baby.

### **Is a flu vaccine safe for my child?**

The flu vaccine is safe for children. It does not cause the flu or any other infection. It is very rare for the flu vaccine to cause an allergic reaction. Check with your child's doctor if you have questions about your child getting the flu or any concerns about allergies.

### **Does the Alliance cover flu vaccines for me and my family?**

Yes! Alliance members can get a flu vaccine at no cost. Be sure to bring your Alliance member ID card with you when you get your vaccine.

### **Where do I go to get my flu vaccine?**

If you are an adult, you can get a flu vaccine at your local pharmacy, a flu vaccine clinic or your doctor's office.

Children and adolescents under age 19 need to get the flu vaccine at their doctor's office. If your child is between 6 months and 8 years old, they may need two doses of the flu vaccine.

### **Baby flu vaccine reward**

Children ages 7 to 24 months old who get their two flu vaccine doses between September and May will be entered into a monthly raffle for a \$100 Target gift card. For more information about rewards, visit [www.thealliance.health/healthrewards](http://www.thealliance.health/healthrewards).

### **Organ and tissue donation**

You can help save lives by becoming an organ or tissue donor. If you are between 15 and 18 years old, you can become a donor with the written consent of your parent or guardian. You can change your mind about being an organ donor at any time. If you want to learn more about organ or tissue donation, talk to your doctor. You can also visit the website of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at [www.organdonor.gov](http://www.organdonor.gov).



## **Community Corner**

### **Where to get healthy food**

Looking for help getting healthy food for your family?  
Below are some local resources with contact information to learn more.

### **CalFresh**

CalFresh can help with your household food budget. You can apply for CalFresh benefits online at [www.getcalfresh.org](http://www.getcalfresh.org) or by calling your county's CalFresh office.

Merced County: **209-385-3000**

Monterey County: **877-410-8823**

Santa Cruz County: **888-421-8080**

### **Local farmers markets**

You can look up local farmers markets that accept CalFresh at [www.ecologycenter.org/fmfinder](http://www.ecologycenter.org/fmfinder).

### **Local food banks**

Local food banks can provide fresh food and help you enroll in CalFresh.

### **Merced County**

Merced County Food Bank: **209-726-3663**

Merced Lao Family Community, Inc.: **209-384-7384**

Catholic Charities: **209-383-2494**

The People's Pantry: **209-769-3231**

### **Monterey County**

Food Bank for Monterey County: **831-758-1523**

Catholic Charities, Monterey Peninsula: **831-393-3110**

Catholic Charities, Salinas Valley: **831-422-0602**

### **Santa Cruz County**

Second Harvest Food Bank Santa Cruz County  
Community Food Hotline: **831-662-0991**, Monday  
through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Catholic Charities, Santa Cruz: **831-431-6939**

Catholic Charities, Watsonville: **831-722-2675**

### **Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

WIC provides supplemental foods, nutrition education  
and more. To apply, call your county WIC office.

Merced County: **209-383-4859**

Monterey County: **831-796-2888** or text **888-413-2599**

Santa Cruz County: **831-722-7121**

**211**

You can get help finding food in your community by  
calling **211**.

## **Benefit spotlight**

### **What is the Nurse Advice Line?**

The Nurse Advice Line is a service available to all Alliance members at no cost to you. You can call if you have questions about your health or your child's health. A registered nurse will help you with what to do next.

The service is available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

### **When do I call the Nurse Advice Line?**

Call when:

- You or your child is sick, and you cannot reach or get an appointment with your doctor.
- You are not sure if you should go to the emergency room.
- You have questions about your health or your child's health.
- You are under 18 years old and want to talk in private about your health concerns.

The nurse can also help you:

- Make an appointment with your primary care provider.
- Make decisions on when and how to seek medical care for an urgent need.

Depending on your health needs, a nurse might also be able to provide at-home advice.

**When you call:** Have your Alliance member ID card with you to tell the nurse your ID number.

**Call 844-971-8907** (TTY: Dial 711).

### **Nurse Advice Line reward**

When you call the Alliance Nurse Advice Line about your health questions, you will be entered into a monthly raffle. You could win a \$50 Target gift card!

For more information about rewards, visit

**[www.thealliance.health/healthrewards](http://www.thealliance.health/healthrewards)**.

**If you are having a medical emergency, call 911** or go to the nearest emergency room.

### **American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services**

Did you know the Alliance offers ASL services for Alliance members who are deaf or hard of hearing?

We work hard to make sure that all Alliance members can talk with their primary care provider about their health care needs. We can help schedule an ASL interpreter to be at your medical visits.

To learn more about the Alliance ASL interpretation services, please call the Health Education Line at **800-700-3874, ext. 5580**. For the Hearing or Speech Assistance Line, call **800-735-2929** (TTY: Dial **711**).

### **Are you at risk of losing your Medi-Cal coverage?**

The public health emergency has ended, and local Medi-Cal offices are reviewing each member's eligibility once a year. This review also happens when a member reports changes to their household. Everyone has a different renewal date. You will get a letter in the mail that tells you when your renewal is due.

**Medi-Cal renewals have already begun. Take action to keep your health coverage!** Do any of these apply to you?

- You need to update your information so Medi-Cal can contact you.
- You got a renewal form and have questions on how to complete it.
- You got a renewal form and have not turned it in.
- You have questions about renewing your Medi-Cal.

If you answered yes to any of the above, visit the Department of Health Care Services website at [www.dhcs.ca.gov/pages/keep-your-medi-cal.aspx](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/pages/keep-your-medi-cal.aspx).

## **Prescription drugs**

If you are a Medi-Cal member, your prescriptions that are filled at a pharmacy are covered by Medi-Cal Rx, not the Alliance. You can view prescription drugs that are covered by Medi-Cal Rx at [www.medi-calrx.dhcs.ca.gov](http://www.medi-calrx.dhcs.ca.gov), or you can request a printed copy by calling **800-977-2273** (TTY: Dial **711**), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you are an IHSS member, pharmacy services are managed by MedImpact. You can view covered prescription drugs on the Alliance website at [www.thealliance.health/prescriptions](http://www.thealliance.health/prescriptions). You can also request a copy by calling Member Services at **800-700-3874** (TTY: Dial **711**), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. You may also call Member Services if you have questions about a medication.

## **Understanding referrals and authorizations**

We want to make sure you know how to get services that are covered by your health plan. Below are some important terms used in health care and what they mean.

### **Referral**

If you are assigned to an Alliance primary care provider (PCP), you must have a ***referral*** to see another doctor.

If your PCP thinks you need to see another doctor, they will fill out a Referral Consultation Form.

If we don't have a referral, we can't pay the bill or claim from the other doctor.

There are some exceptions. See your Evidence of Coverage or Member Handbook for a complete list. The Member Handbook is found online at

**[www.thealliance.health/memberhandbook](http://www.thealliance.health/memberhandbook)**.

### **Authorized referral**

Our service areas are Merced, Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. If your PCP refers you to a doctor out of our service area, they will need to get approval from the Alliance ahead of time. This is called an ***authorized referral***.

This means that we need to approve the referral before you can see the other doctor.

If you are an Alliance In-Home Supportive Services member, you will need an authorized referral if your PCP refers you to a doctor who doesn't work with the Alliance—even if the doctor is in our service area.

Alliance members who are enrolled in the California Children's Services Program will also need an authorized referral for specialty care.

### **Prior authorization**

The Alliance must approve some services, procedures, medications and equipment before you get them. This is called ***prior authorization***.

The provider who is going to perform the service must send us a request to let us know what you need and the reason why.

If the request is medically necessary and a covered benefit, we will approve it and you can get the service.

If we deny a request, you will be able to file an appeal if you disagree with our decision.

**The Alliance is texting members when it is time to renew their Medi-Cal!** You might get a text message from us.