



LIVING HEALTHY

SEPTEMBER 2020
Volume 26, Issue 3

A newsletter for the members of Central California Alliance for Health

Your health is important to us!

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, you may be wondering if it is OK to visit your doctor. The answer is yes! Our doctors are committed to keeping you safe and are offering many options for you to get care, such as:

- Limited seating in the waiting area to allow for social distancing
- Special office hours to separate preventive and sick visits
- Telehealth visits, which include phone and videoconference appointments

It is very important to continue with your well-care visits and get the care you need to stay healthy. Do not put off seeing your doctor, especially if you



have a chronic condition, have ongoing treatments or if you are pregnant. Putting off care can be dangerous and may cause unwanted health outcomes.

It is also important that children stay on track with their well-child visits and immunizations. Keeping children up-to-date with their

immunizations is an important step in their current and future health.

We encourage you to call your doctor to discuss your choices for being seen and getting the care that you and your family deserve. Be sure to get your flu shot when you see your doctor or pharmacist!

COVID-19 information for members



The Alliance will continue to update its website with information you need to know about COVID-19 and your health care. COVID-19 information for members is at www.ccah-alliance.org/COVID-19_member_info.html.

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Eat well to keep your immune system strong





Eating nutritiously has always been a great way to stay healthy. A healthy diet strengthens your immune system, and a strong immune system helps protect you from illness. And while no one food or diet can prevent illness, eating healthy can help your body prevent, fight and recover from infections during the COVID-19 pandemic.


What does healthy eating look like?


Of course, it is best to keep your immune system healthy all the time, not just when a virus is going around. That means focusing on a well-balanced diet filled with nutritious foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains.


According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, these nutrients can help strengthen your immune system:


 **Probiotics.** These good bacteria can be found in cultured dairy products like yogurt.


 **Protein.** This may be especially helpful in healing and recovery. You can find this in plant and animal products, such as milk, eggs, beef, chicken, fish, nuts, beans and seeds.

 **Vitamin A.** This helps regulate the immune system and protect against infections. Look for it in sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, spinach, eggs, or milk and cereal fortified with vitamin A.

 **Vitamin C.** Look for this in citrus fruits. It helps the immune system by increasing the amount of antibodies in your system.

 **Vitamin D.** Find it in fatty fish and eggs, as well as drinks fortified with vitamin D.

 **Vitamin E.** This works as an antioxidant. Antioxidants decrease inflammation. Find vitamin E in fortified cereals, sunflower seeds, vegetable oils and peanut butter.

 **Zinc.** This may help wounds heal. You can find it in beans, wheat germ and tofu. But zinc is best absorbed from animal sources like beef and fish.

The best way to get the nutrients your immune system needs is to include a wide variety of healthy foods in your diet. That is usually a better option than a supplement. Overloading on specific nutrients will not give your

immune system a super boost. And taking too much of some of them can actually do more harm than good.

Take an all-around approach

Eating nutritious foods is just one way to strengthen your immune system. Other good habits include:

- Getting a good amount of sleep each night
- Being active every day
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Coping with stress and anxiety in healthy ways, like deep breathing or exercise

And of course, a healthy diet is not a replacement for other steps to protect yourself from COVID-19. It is still essential to:

- Stay at least 6 feet away from others in public
- Wash your hands often
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
- Keep away from sick people
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect shared surfaces daily
- Wear a cloth face mask in public



Service with a smile!

Have you ever wondered who is on the other end of the phone when you call Member Services?

Our representatives are caring, dedicated professionals. They are here to answer your calls Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Our representatives are ready to:

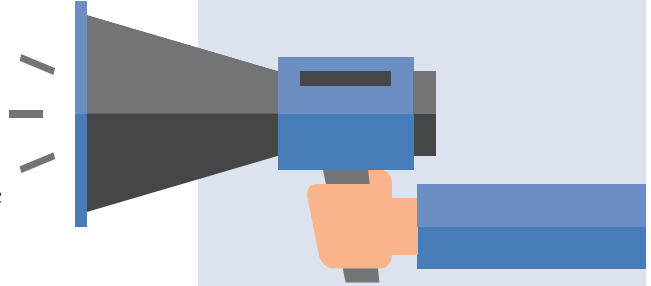
- Help you understand how your health plan works
- Answer questions about your benefits
- Explain how you can get medical care and services
- Let you know which doctors and clinics you can go to
- Help you choose or change your primary care provider
- Offer interpreter services if you do not speak English
- Help arrange transportation if you do not have ways to get to your doctor appointment
- Send you a new Alliance ID card if you lose yours
- Assist you with concerns or complaints

We have representatives in Merced, Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. They live and work in the communities we serve. What they have in common is that they care about our members and are here to help.



You and your health are important to us

Please call us at **800-700-3874** (TTY **800-735-2929** or **7-1-1**) if you have questions, need help or have concerns about your care as an Alliance member. We're here to help!



Let your voice be heard!

We have many ways for you to let us know how we are doing and how we can improve. One of them is through our Member Services Advisory Group (MSAG).

Some of the people in this group are Alliance members. Some of them are people who work in agencies and programs that provide services to Alliance members. Through the Advisory Group, we are able to hear from our members and people who serve our members. We use this information to help us better understand what our members think, want and need.

Any Alliance member or parent of a child who is an Alliance member can join the Advisory Group. There are four meetings a year. Alliance members, or parents of an Alliance member, can get \$50 for attending each meeting.

If you would like more information or want an application to join, please call **800-700-3874, ext. 5567**.

What you need to know about Other Health Coverage (OHC)



The flu shot: Why timing matters

When it comes to getting your yearly flu shot, it pays to be an early bird. Here's why:

It takes about two weeks after the shot for your body to build immunity and start protecting against the flu. So it's a good idea to get yours before the flu starts going around.

When is the best time? As soon as the shot is available in the fall. It's good to have it done by the end of October. But even in January or later, a flu shot is worth it. The flu is still active well into the spring.

Yearly flu shots are a good idea for everyone in your family 6 months and older.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Medi-Cal is always the payer of last resort, so the OHC will be your primary insurance.

You or your family member may have OHC if:

- You have health insurance through your job, Covered California, your spouse or partner, or if you bought insurance on your own
- You became eligible because of a new life event—getting married, for example
- You have court-ordered coverage for dependent children

Your OHC may have ended if:

- Your health coverage switched from Covered California to Medi-Cal
- Your job ended or you were laid off
- You did not work enough hours to qualify for insurance through your job
- You stopped paying your insurance premiums
- You canceled your insurance for any reason

Who do I contact to update my OHC information?

If you have Medi-Cal, call your

county's Medi-Cal office or go to the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) website. It is important that you give them your new information so they can update your case. They will have to verify that your OHC has ended before they can update your information.

To update your information by phone, call:

- Merced County: **209-385-3000**
- Monterey County: **877-410-8823**
- Santa Cruz County: **888-421-8080**

To update your information on the California DHCS website, go to: www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/Pages/TPLRD_OCU_cont.aspx.

You should also call the Alliance's Member Services Department at **800-700-3874** to update your information.

Why is it important that I update my OHC?

- To make sure there are no problems with being seen at your doctor's office or getting prescriptions at the pharmacy
- So you will not get a bill from your doctor's office

Talking with your primary care provider

When it comes to health care, patients play a major role. Practicing good communication with your primary care provider is an important way to embrace your personal health care journey. Clear and honest communication between you and your primary care provider can help you both build a safe connection. This means you can voice your concerns and make informed choices about your health care. We know that talking with your primary care provider is not always easy. Below are some examples of questions to discuss with your primary care provider if you have health concerns during your visit.



Question	Example
1. What am I seeing or feeling that I want my primary care provider to check?	My left ear aches each time I blow my nose.
2. When did it begin?	It started about a week ago when I first caught a cold.
3. What makes it better or worse?	It feels worse when I blow my nose and feels better in the morning after I shower.
4. What questions do I have and what worries me?	When will I start to feel better? Does the medicine have side effects?

Other tips for your visit to the doctor:

- Bring a list of all the medications you are taking.
- Consider asking a friend or family member to go with you for support.
- If you have any medical needs, such as wheelchair access, or require language assistance or interpreting services, let the doctor’s office staff know so they can help you.
- Ask what the office policy is for missed appointments. The office can help to reschedule appointments or provide other options, such as phone appointments, if it is difficult to go to the doctor in person.

A good time to consider breast health



As of yet, there is no sure way to prevent breast cancer. Even so, there are steps you can take to lower your risk.

One key step? Stay at a healthy body weight. This is even more important in midlife and later. Here's why:

After a woman's periods stop, most of her estrogen comes from fat cells. Estrogen can spur the growth of many breast tumors. That's why too many pounds later in life could raise breast cancer risk. This seems to be especially

true if those pounds end up on your waist.

There are a number of other steps you can take to help prevent breast cancer. These include:

Avoid alcohol.

Drinking can raise your risk of getting breast cancer. In fact, your risk goes up the more you drink.

Move more. Exercise may be able to help lower your risk. Try to get 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week.

Know the risks of hormone therapy. There are risks and benefits of taking hormone therapy.

Talk to your doctor to learn more.

Finding breast cancer early

Breast cancer can still develop even with the above safeguards. So be sure to talk to your doctor about when to have mammograms.

Regular mammograms can help find cancer in its early stages. Finding cancer early can help give you a head start on treatment.

Some women may have certain risk factors. So you may need to talk with your doctor about additional screening tests, such as an MRI scan.

Source: American Cancer Society

Long-acting reversible contraceptives: What are they, and are they right for me?

Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) are very effective birth control methods. In fact, they are 98% to 99.9% effective in preventing pregnancy! This type of birth control lasts for years at a time, so you do not have to rely on remembering birth control every day.

LARCs are a good option for women who do not want a baby soon. This could be because you may not want more children now but you want to keep your options

open. Or it might be because you do not wish to have children within the next few years. Or maybe you might not want children at all. The great thing about LARCs is that they are reversible—so if your situation changes, you can stop using them and become fertile again.

LARCs can last between 3 and 10 years depending on the type used. They may come in the form of an implant that is placed under the skin of the arm or a small

device that is placed in the uterus. They all require a small procedure for placement; however, once it is placed it provides long-term, reliable birth control. It is important to know that LARCs do not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In order to protect yourself against STIs, also use a condom during intercourse.

Which one should you choose? This is an individual choice. Different people will prefer different options. Talk to your doctor about which option may be best for you!



Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that happen from 0 to 17 years of age. These events impact a child’s development and coping skills, often making a child feel unsafe and unstable, and can affect relationships. ACEs are linked to the development of chronic health problems, mental illness and substance misuse and can impact education and job opportunities into adulthood. Examples of traumatic events are:

- Experiencing violence, abuse, neglect, mental illness or parental abandonment
- Bullying by children/adults

- Homelessness
 - Natural disasters and war
 - Any form of discrimination
- Children may show signs of behavioral and mental health challenges, irritability, depression, acting out, and difficulty sleeping or concentrating.
- However, parents and communities can do a lot to make children feel safe, heard and nurtured. To prevent ACEs:
- Teach children to handle stress, resolve conflicts and manage emotions and behaviors. Help children share, talk about and process what they are going through.
 - Connect children to other caring

Alliance drug formulary changes

EFFECTIVE MAY 7, 2020

Additions to formulary	
Eye, ear, nose, throat inflammation	■ Flonase ■ Sensimist for children <18 years old
Diabetes	■ Gvoke prefilled syringe ■ Gvoke Hypopen
Seizures	■ Valtoco ■ Nayzilam

adults like teachers, coaches, family and mentors.

- Look at children. Let them know you see them, you value them and that they matter.
- Just be present with them.
- Practice looking for joy and the good.
- Keep learning about ACEs and their impacts. For many more tips, visit [acesconnection.com](https://www.acesconnection.com).

The Alliance can also help. We offer support options for those who experienced traumatic events in childhood. Call Beacon Health Options, our behavioral health provider, at 855-765-9700, or visit our website at www.ccah-alliance.org/behavioral-health.html.



Caring for an aging parent?

How to reduce your risk of caregiver burnout

Stepping into the role of caregiver for your older parent can be very rewarding. It is heartfelt work—but it is also often stressful work.

Over time, too much stress can wear anyone down. If the stress becomes overwhelming, you could begin to experience a sense of exhaustion and hopelessness that experts call caregiver burnout. And at that point, you cannot properly take care of your own health, much less tend to your parent's health and needs.

Am I burned out?

The symptoms of caregiver burnout can include:

- Eating too much or too little or drinking or smoking more
- Feeling tired or run down most of the time
- Having trouble concentrating
- Feeling irritable or resentful toward your parent
- Neglecting your own needs

Caregiver stress and burnout can also contribute to mental health

problems, like depression, and can even harm your physical health.

Take action

Burnout often happens when caregivers do not take time to care for their own physical and emotional health. Here are some tips from experts that can help reduce your risk for burnout and make you a better, happier caregiver.

Ask for caregiving help. Other family members, or even friends, may be willing to help with some daily tasks—like driving your parent to medical appointments or running errands.

Nourish your health. Eat a healthy, balanced diet and get enough exercise and sleep. If you can, take your parent on short walks.

Make time for hobbies or other activities you enjoy. Try to take at least a few minutes each day to unwind and recharge.

Get relief. Ask a relative or close friend to stay with your parent, or consider using a respite service (such as an adult day center) so you can enjoy a break.

Stay connected. It is important to keep up your friendships. If you cannot leave the house, set up a time to call a friend each week.

Join a support group in person or online. Share your feelings with other people who may know what you're going through and who can offer encouragement and possible solutions to ongoing problems.

Schedule checkups with your doctor. Speak up if you feel sad, hopeless or overwhelmed.

Sources: American Heart Association; Family Caregiver Alliance; Helpguide

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LIVING HEALTHY is published for the members and community partners of CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH, 1600 Green Hills Road, Suite 101, Scotts Valley, CA 95066, telephone 831-430-5500 or 800-700-3874, ext. 5505, website www.ccah-alliance.org.

Information in LIVING HEALTHY comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider.

Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

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