



# LIVING HEALTHY

DECEMBER 2020  
Volume 26, Issue 4

A newsletter for the members of Central California Alliance for Health



## Protecting your privacy

Details about your health care are personal. You deserve to have them kept that way. That is why we do all we can to protect your privacy.

We may disclose your information for treatment, payment and health care operations without having to ask your permission. An example would be to tell a provider you were eligible as an Alliance member so he or she could treat you. There are other situations in which we may also disclose information without your permission. These are determined by law.

If other people ask us for your information, outside of what is allowed by law, you must say it is OK before we can give it to them. We often review the way we keep your information safe. And we will continue to do so. We want you to have good care and peace of mind.

For more information about our privacy practices, see the Notice of Privacy Practices at the back of your Member Handbook/ Evidence of Coverage. It is also available on our website, [www.ccah-alliance.org](http://www.ccah-alliance.org).



## Important prescription drug benefit update for Medi-Cal members

Beginning April 1, 2021, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) will manage the prescription drug benefits for Medi-Cal members. The new program is called Medi-Cal Rx. The Alliance will no longer manage your prescription drug benefits after March 31, 2021. Alliance members can continue to fill prescriptions at the pharmacy as usual or through mail order. You will need to present your Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card (BIC) when filling a prescription at the pharmacy. If you have questions about your prescriptions on or after April 1, you will need to call Medi-Cal Rx at **800-977-2273** (TTY: 7-1-1) or go to **[medi-calrx.dhcs.ca.gov](http://medi-calrx.dhcs.ca.gov)**.

Standard  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Merced, CA  
Permit No. 1186

Central California Alliance for Health  
1600 Green Hills Road, Suite 101  
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

# Have a happy holiday—even with COVID-19

It is the holidays, and COVID-19 is still a presence in the U.S. What does that mean for holiday celebrations?

Some parties may need to be called off. Buffet-style office parties, for instance, are probably not a safe idea.

And what about family gatherings—especially large ones? These may look very different from years past, if they happen at all.

Still, you can enjoy the holidays while doing everything you can to stay safe from the virus. Here are some suggestions:

❄️ **Weather permitting, dine outdoors.** There is less risk of virus spread when gathering outside. So take the party into the backyard if you can.

❄️ **Wear masks.** Ask everyone to wear a mask when gathering indoors and when outdoors if social distancing is not possible. Is there a creative crafter in the group? Maybe they could sew fun, holiday-themed masks for kids (2 years and older) and adults.

❄️ **Ban the buffet.** Assign people to be servers. It is less risky than letting everyone serve themselves.

❄️ **Arrange tables and chairs to accommodate social distancing.** Group people from the same household together at smaller tables set 6 feet apart.

❄️ **Avoid close contact.** No matter how happy people are to see each other, discourage hugs and handshakes. Verbal hellos, bowing and waving are all OK.

❄️ **Hold a series of small gatherings.** If your big family typically gets together on one day, could smaller groups get together over the course of several days?

❄️ **Have a video celebration.** Instead of gathering for dinner in person, gather virtually using a video chat app. Does someone in the family have a secret holiday recipe? Ask them to reveal it in advance this year so everyone can make it and enjoy it together virtually. Think of other holiday traditions to celebrate via video, too, like decorating a tree or opening presents. You can share the spirit of the holidays this way.

❄️ **Tap into teens' technology skills.** Many teens are masters at using technology and can teach less-savvy adults how to connect via video apps. Ask your teens for help hosting a game or movie night. It's a great way to share some fun when you cannot be physically together during the holidays.



# Fluoride varnish application

Healthy gums and teeth are important to your child's overall health. Poor oral care can cause cavities, pain and infections that may lead to problems with eating, speaking, playing and learning. Help your child practice good care at home by:

- Brushing twice a day for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste.
- Flossing once a day.
- Limiting sugary snacks and drinks.
- Drinking tap water (many public water supplies contain safe levels of fluoride).
- Always washing your hands before and after brushing and flossing.

Your child's doctor can also help prevent cavities by applying fluoride varnish in their office. Ask the doctor about fluoride varnish at your child's



**NEED HELP FINDING A DENTIST?** Call Medi-Cal Dental's (Denti-Cal) Member Telephone Service Center at **800-322-6384**.

well-visit. Here are some quick facts about fluoride varnish:

- Fluoride is a protective coating brushed on the top and sides of teeth to prevent tooth decay.
- It is safe, quick and does not hurt.
- It can be applied at well-child visits, other doctor appointments and at the dental office.
- Fluoride works best when it is applied two to five times a year by your child's doctor or dentist.
- Fluoride should be applied just after

the first tooth comes in.

After the fluoride is applied, it may appear yellow on the teeth. Not to worry, brushing the next morning will return teeth to their normal color. Don't give foods that are hard, crunchy or chewy for the rest of the day after application. Your child should brush and floss teeth the next morning.

Keep seeing your dentist too—they will help with teeth cleaning two times a year.

## Additions to formulary

HIV medications	Truvada 200/300mg Prezista 800mg Isentress 400mg Ritonavir 100mg	Descovy 200/25mg Tivicay 50mg Norvir 100mg
Hormonal contraception	Depo-SubQ Provera 104 104mg/0.65ml	
Allergy eye drops	Azelastine Olopatadine (Patanol) Olopatadine (Pataday)	
Stomach ulcer medications	Omeprazole ODT	
EFFECTIVE DEC. 1, 2020 Diabetes	Semglee (vial and pen)	

## Alliance drug formulary changes

EFFECTIVE  
SEPT. 1, 2020





# Check in and check up with your doctor

You may be wondering about going to the doctor during COVID-19. Doctors' offices have taken extra steps to make sure your visit is safe, like:

- Scheduling well-visits at a different time or location from sick visits.
- Limiting the number of people in waiting rooms.

Vaccines and checkups are important for people of all ages, even during COVID-19. Babies, kids and teens need vaccines to stay protected against 16 serious diseases. During well-child visits, the doctor will check your child's overall health too. Adults also need vaccines and well-check visits. It is very important to see your doctor if you have a chronic condition (like diabetes or high blood pressure), need ongoing treatments or are pregnant.

Remember, flu season is here! Now is the time to get your flu shot if you have not already done so. A yearly flu vaccine is recommended for anyone over 6 months of age to reduce the



**REMEMBER, FLU SEASON IS HERE!**  
Now is the time to get your flu shot if you have not already done so.

chances of illness caused by the flu. Getting the flu vaccine will avoid confusion with symptoms caused by COVID-19. Immunity to the flu declines over time and may be too low to provide protection after one year, so a flu shot is needed every year.

Health issues may happen at any time, so it is important to keep your well-check and preventive care doctor appointments. Call your doctor's office and ask whether you need to come in. Stay healthy during COVID-19. Check in with your doctor and make sure you are up to date with vaccines and checkups!



## Are you unsure about vaccinating your child?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a dangerous drop in routine childhood vaccinations. Now more than ever, it is very important for parents to keep their children up to date with vaccines and regular checkups to maintain good health. When more people are vaccinated, more people are protected against diseases. This helps prevent the spread of infection in our community. An unvaccinated child is more likely to need to go to a clinic or hospital, which can increase the risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

As a parent, you may have questions or concerns about your

child's vaccinations. This is normal. What can you do to inform yourself?

### 1. Seek trustworthy sources:

- Health care providers.
- Government health agency websites:
  - › Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)).
  - › National Institutes of Health ([nih.gov](https://www.nih.gov)).

### 2. Think about the risks of opting out of vaccination:

- Your child getting dangerous infections.
- Missing school, playtime and everyday activities.
- Lost work time for parents.

### 3. Know the facts:

- Avoid medical advice from social media or blogs unless you can verify the information.
- **Vaccines are safe.**
- **Vaccines work.**
- Adverse events from vaccines are rare.
- It is safe for your child to see their doctor for vaccinations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Call your child's doctor to check if your child is due for any vaccinations or a well-child visit. If so, schedule that appointment. If your child hasn't had a flu shot this year, now is the time to schedule that too.

# Confused by referrals and authorizations?

There are many terms used in health care, and sometimes it can be confusing to understand them all. We want to make sure you know how to get services that are covered by your plan, so here is some information that should help.

## Referral

If you are assigned to an Alliance primary care provider, you must have a referral to see another doctor. There are some exceptions to this. See your Evidence of Coverage or Member Handbook for a complete list.

If your primary care provider thinks you need to see another doctor, he or she will fill out what is called a Referral Consultation Form. Your primary care provider sends a copy to the doctor you are being referred to and a copy to the Alliance. The referral is how the other doctor and the Alliance know your primary care provider has approved the visit. If we do not have a referral, we will not pay the claim from the other doctor.

## Authorized referral

In most cases, your primary care provider will refer you to a doctor in our service area. Our service area includes Santa Cruz, Monterey and Merced counties. If your primary care provider refers you to a doctor out of our service area, he or she will need to get approval from us in advance. This is called an authorized referral. It is called this because we have to authorize (approve) the

referral before you can see the other doctor.

If you are an Alliance In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) member, you will also need an authorized referral if your primary care provider is referring you to a doctor that is not contracted with the Alliance—even if the doctor is in our service area. Alliance members who are enrolled in the California Children's Services (CCS) Program will also need an authorized referral for specialty care.

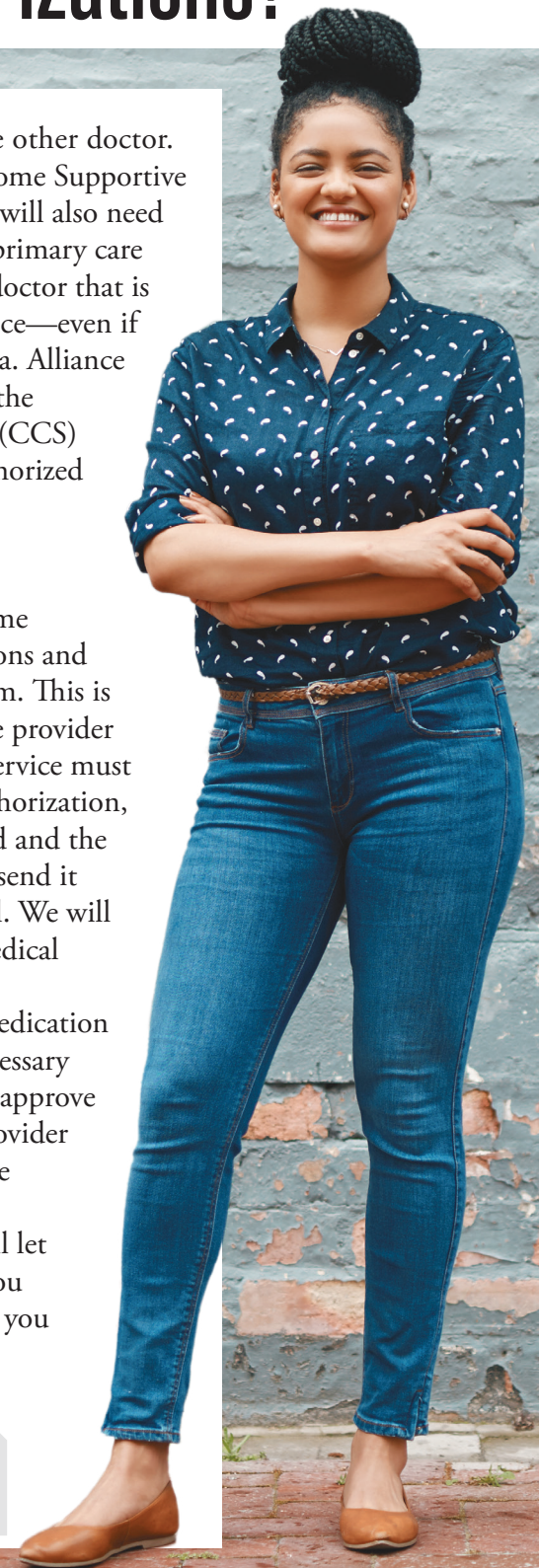
## Prior authorization

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 for prior authorization, letting us know what you need and the reason why. The provider can send it electronically or by fax or mail. We will review the request and any medical records the provider sends.

If the service, procedure, medication or equipment is medically necessary and a covered benefit, we will approve the request. We will let the provider know and then you can get the service.

If we deny a request, we will let you and the provider know. You will be able to file an appeal if you disagree with our decision.

**FOR A COMPLETE LIST** of services that do not require a referral, see your Evidence of Coverage or Member Handbook.





# How to handle quarantine fatigue

Social distancing is one of the most effective ways to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Staying apart has saved lives.

But progress toward reopening can be slow and have setbacks. As a result, many of us may have bouts of quarantine fatigue. This can cause:

- Increased irritability.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Eating more or less than usual.
- Feeling run-down.
- Experiencing a lack of motivation.

To get through it, it helps to have some coping mechanisms.

## Hang in there

If you're feeling restless and weary, the American Psychological Association and other experts offer these tips to cope with the mental health effects of the pandemic and social isolation:

**Change your thinking.** You are helping to control the pandemic by



social distancing. So try to focus on the good you are doing.

**Take a few deep breaths.** When you feel worried or upset, take a few minutes to relax your body and mind.

**Get a move on—in your home or outside while social distancing.** Exercise lowers stress and lifts your mood.

**Reach out.** If you cannot be with loved ones, stay in touch with calls, video chats or social media. Staying connected (even virtually) is even more important right now.

**Keep a gratitude journal.** Each day jot down a few words about what went well. When you examine your journal, it may help you find hope and positivity.

**Limit the news.** It is important to stay informed. But constant COVID-19 news can fuel your fears. You can turn to public health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for reliable updates ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)).

**IF YOUR STRESS** becomes overwhelming, call your doctor. It's also important to check with your provider if you find yourself using alcohol or drugs to cope. You can also call Beacon Health Options, the Alliance's mental health provider, at **855-765-9700** for help. And remember, this trying time won't last forever.



## The Alliance is committed to serving you better

This year, the Alliance completed our first **Population Needs**

**Assessment (PNA)**, a new yearly requirement with the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). You may recall that the Alliance worked on a similar assessment, called the

Group Needs Assessment (GNA), which was completed every five years. With the new DHCS requirement, the PNA will now replace the GNA.

The goal of the PNA is to improve the health outcomes of our members and ensure that we are meeting the needs of our members by identifying:

1. Member health status and behaviors.
2. Health education and cultural and linguistic needs.
3. Health disparities.
4. Gaps in services.

In planning for the 2020 PNA report, we looked at our 2019

# When staying home because of COVID-19 is not safe

Health officials caution that home is the safest place to be as COVID-19 spreads. But that may not be true for people experiencing domestic violence.

Being trapped at home with an abuser can make abuse—and not just physical abuse—worse. Abuse is about power and control. As a result, abusers may do things like withhold

hand sanitizer or threaten to cancel health insurance. They may also try to stop their partners from getting medical care or further isolate them from others by using scare tactics.

## Make a plan

That is why it is very important to have a safety plan ready if you are a victim of domestic violence. That plan should include how to leave in the safest possible way. You should also have contact information for:

- A neighbor, friend or relative you can go to for help in a crisis.
- A nearby emergency shelter.

But keep in mind: Shelters may be full during the pandemic. So you may need to sleep in a motel or in your car, at least for a while.

If you do remain at home, stay in touch with supportive friends and family with phone calls and online messaging, if it is safe to do so. Reaching out can help ease some of the stress of this very difficult time for you.

Now more than ever, practice good self-care too. As much as possible, try to stick to your daily routine and make time for exercise and sleep. Caring for yourself can make a big difference in how you feel.



## When someone you know is being abused

If someone you care about is in an abusive relationship, you may not be able to offer face-to-face support during the pandemic. But there are still ways you can help:

- Encourage them to think about their own well-being and a safety plan.
- Let them know that abuse is never their fault.
- Tell them that you are available to listen and help as much as you can.

Sources: National Domestic Violence Hotline; World Health Organization

**ARE YOU IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?** For support—including help creating a safety plan—call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-799-7233**. If you are unable to speak on the phone, text **LOVEIS** to **22522**.

member data, provided by DHCS, and made outreach phone calls to some of you, asking for your help in completing a survey.

Based on your responses and findings from the 2020 PNA report, the Alliance is developing action plan activities to address member needs around health education, cultural and linguistic, and quality improvement

programs and services. All of this is with the goal of improving health outcomes for all Alliance members.

The Alliance is committed to serving our members and improving programs and services. To show our commitment, we will share our 2020 PNA findings and action plan activities with you throughout the next year.

If you have questions about the Alliance 2020 PNA report, 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. For the Hearing or Speech Assistance Line, call **800-735-2929** (TTY: Dial **7-1-1**).

## WIC is open!

WIC continues to provide vital nutrition and breastfeeding support for pregnant and postpartum women, babies, and young children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. WIC is providing services via telephone and remotely loading WIC benefits to the WIC card to minimize in-person contact and keep families and clinic staff safe. Contact your local WIC office to make an appointment or for any questions about WIC services:

**Santa Cruz County:**

831-722-7121

**Monterey County:**

831-796-2888

**Merced County:**

209-383-4859



## How to bring down high blood pressure

High blood pressure is a serious health threat. If yours is too high, your doctor may suggest medicine to help lower it. It is really important to take it. But there are other changes you can make right now to help bring it down too:

- ✓ **Cut down on salt.** Aim for less than 1,500 milligrams a day. How much is that? There are 1,725 milligrams of sodium in  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon of table salt.
- ✓ **Get physical.** Regular exercise can help lower blood pressure. Ask your doctor how much is right for you.
- ✓ **Limit alcohol.** Health experts suggest no more than one drink a day for women and two for men.
- ✓ **Don't smoke.** Smoking raises blood pressure, among its many other health risks. Your doctor can help you quit.

Here's what else you can do to take control of your blood pressure:

- **Know your numbers.** For most people, normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg. Ask your doctor what your numbers should be.
- **Check it regularly.** Many pharmacies have machines that can take your blood pressure. Or you can buy a blood pressure monitor to use at home. If your blood pressure is often high, talk to your doctor.
- **Keep a record.** Write your blood pressure readings in a journal or keep track with your phone. You and your doctor can review patterns together.

When you manage your blood pressure, you can also lower your risk of heart attack, stroke and other serious health problems.

Sources: American Heart Association; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

# LIVING HEALTHY

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](http://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.

Editor

Erin Huang

Quality and Health Programs Supervisors

Desirre Herrera  
and Mao Moua

Quality and Health Programs Manager

Deborah Pineda

[www.ccah-alliance.org](http://www.ccah-alliance.org)

2020 © Coffey Communications, Inc. All rights reserved.