



LIVING HEALTHY

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A newsletter for the members of Central California Alliance for Health

Census 2020: Be counted

What is the 2020 Census?

Every 10 years, the Census Bureau counts each person living in the U.S. on Census Day (April 1). This is done through a survey. Citizenship and immigration status do not affect participation.

Why is the census important?

The U.S. government gives states and local communities 10 years of funding based on the responses of one census. In California, your answers could help your community get its fair share of the \$76.6 billion up for grabs each year for programs like Medicaid, SNAP, WIC, foster care, Section 8, the National School Lunch program and highway construction.

That's why it's important that your family, friends and neighbors are counted in the 2020 Census!

Is answering the census safe?

Your personal information is confidential and protected by law. Answers will NOT be shared with



immigration or law enforcement agencies. Answers can't be used to determine eligibility for government benefits either.

How do you answer the 2020 Census?

Each home will receive a short survey by mail in March 2020. The law requires one person from each address to respond.

You can answer by mail, by phone or online. Households that don't respond will be visited by a census representative to collect your responses.

Paper surveys are in English and Spanish, but there are more languages available if you answer online or by phone. If you need help understanding the census in your language, there will be videos and printed guides in 59 non-English languages.

NEED MORE INFO? To learn more, visit 2020census.gov.

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Could it be asthma?

How to spot the symptoms

THE ALLIANCE is here to help! The Alliance offers the Healthy Breathing for Life Program. This program connects our members with asthma education classes for all ages. You and your child can learn new ways to manage asthma. You will also learn how to avoid asthma attacks and how to use medicine the best way. Call the Alliance's Health Education Line at **800-700-3874, ext. 5580** for more information.

Think about how hard it would be to breathe through a straw for minutes or hours on end. That's how breathing can sometimes feel for people who have asthma. Asthma is a chronic lung disease that causes the airways to narrow. This can make it hard to breathe. More than 25 million Americans now live with asthma, and that number continues to rise. And while asthma affects people of all ages, it most often starts when you're a kid. It's important to spot the symptoms of asthma and to get medical help for it.

What are the signs?

Sometimes asthma symptoms are mild and go away on their own. But at other times, symptoms can get worse. When this happens, it could bring on an asthma attack.

Common asthma symptoms include:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath

Not all people with asthma have the same symptoms. And having

these symptoms doesn't always mean someone has the disease.

If you think you have asthma, see your doctor. He or she can find out if you have the disease by:

- Looking at your health history
- Doing a physical exam
- Performing a simple lung function test

What causes it?

The cause of someone's asthma isn't always known. But a number of things—known as triggers—can bring on symptoms or make them worse.

Common triggers include:

- Allergens, such as dust mites; animal dander; mold; and pollens from trees, grasses and flowers
- Cigarette smoke, air pollution and certain chemicals
- Respiratory infections
- Physical activity
- Stress

If you do have asthma, your doctor can help you find out what your triggers are. You can then learn how to avoid them.

Treating asthma

There is no cure for asthma. But it can be managed well if you learn how to control your asthma. It's important to get ongoing care and watch for signs that the disease is getting worse.

Asthma is treated with two types of drugs:

- Quick-relief drugs. These provide temporary relief from asthma symptoms.
- Long-term control drugs. These are taken daily to control airway swelling.

It's important to take your asthma drugs the right way. So be sure to follow your doctor's instructions.

Most of the time, you can treat asthma symptoms on your own. But get medical help right away if you:

- Have trouble walking or talking because you are out of breath
- Develop blue lips or fingernails

By working with your doctor and learning how to manage your asthma, you can breathe freely and live an active life.

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Well-child visits are important

In late October 2019, the Alliance partnered with a vendor, CareNet, to remind parents and guardians that their children were due for their well-child visits and vaccines. The Alliance worked with CareNet to make automated calls (also known as robocalls) to parents to remind them about their child’s health needs. The Alliance keeps track of the number of kids and teens who are in need of these visits and vaccinations, as it is an important way to check the overall health of its younger members. The Alliance has noticed a trend that many of our child and adolescent members are not being seen by their doctor for their well-visit and are behind on their vaccines. The Alliance wants to remind members

so that they are aware that these services are available to them and are important.

What is a well-child visit?

A well-child visit is with the child’s doctor. The doctor will complete a physical exam, check growth and development, complete screening tests, and give any vaccines that are needed. Children grow and change quickly, so even if a child is healthy, well-visits are important in order to focus on wellness and talk about ways to improve care and prevent health problems.

Why are vaccines important?

Childhood vaccines protect children from a number of serious and

potentially life-threatening diseases at a time in their lives when they are most vulnerable. Your provider can talk with you about which vaccines your child or adolescent needs, as well as answer any questions or concerns you may have. Children under 2 years of age need a lot of vaccines to boost their immune system to prevent diseases. Make sure to ask your provider for the recommended vaccine schedule so that you know which vaccines your child needs, how many they need and when they need them.

What can I expect when my child receives vaccines?

For information on what to expect before, during and after vaccines are given, visit [cdc.gov/vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines).

How often does my child or adolescent need a visit?

Children from 0 to 24 months of age need to be seen using this schedule below. Children should receive six or more visits by 15 months of age. During your child’s first year, it is important that they receive their Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) services.

2 to 5 days	1 month	2 months	4 months	6 months
12 months	15 months	18 months	24 months	30 months

Children ages 3 to 21 need to be seen at least once a year. Your child’s doctor will work with you and your child to help them be healthy. During these visits, it is a good time to ask the doctor any questions or concerns you may have.





The Alliance supports you in a healthy new year!

The Alliance offers programs for you and your family to learn great ways to eat healthy and be more active. We can send you handouts with helpful tips and ideas. You can speak with a Health Programs team member about ways to improve your health. We can also tell you about low-cost or no-cost ways to get active in your area. Small changes can make a big difference!

For more information about Alliance Health Promotion and Disease Management programs, call the **Alliance's Health Education Line at 800-700-3874, ext. 5580.**



Does your doctor speak your language?

It is important that you can talk with your doctor clearly. If you and your doctor are not able to understand each other all the time, it could affect your health care. The Alliance has doctors in its network who speak a language other than English. You can find these doctors in your Provider Directory or by calling Member Services.

If you have trouble talking with your doctor, we can help. You don't have to use family or friends. You have the right to a qualified interpreter, and the Alliance pays for this service at no cost to you. Your doctor can call a special phone line to get an interpreter who speaks your language. Then you and your doctor will talk through the interpreter.

If you would like an interpreter, let your doctor's office know which language you need when you call to make an appointment. Ask them to call the Alliance's telephone interpreter service when you arrive.

As an Alliance member, you have the right to these services at no cost to you:

FOR HELP WITH getting an interpreter or reading the documents you receive, please call Member Services at **800-700-3874**, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. For the Hearing or Speech Assistance Line, call **800-735-2929** (TTY: Dial 7-1-1).

● Interpreter services in your language to help you talk with your:

- Doctor
- Other health care provider
- Health plan

In most cases, telephonic interpreters are used, but a face-to-face interpreter may be used for complex cases. The Alliance must approve face-to-face cases ahead of time.

● Written letters and notices that affect your health care coverage are also offered in your language. We can also help you read these documents if you speak a language other than English.

Who to call for insurance help

Not sure who to call for help with your Medi-Cal insurance? Here are some tips:

Call the Alliance to:

- Learn more about how your health plan works
- Get help with understanding your health care benefits and how to get care
- Choose or change your Alliance primary care provider
- Let us know if you are not happy with your provider, the care you are receiving or something the Alliance has done
- Ask for a new Alliance ID card if you lose yours

You can reach the Alliance Member Services at **800-700-3874**.

Call County Medi-Cal to:

- Apply for or renew your Medi-Cal coverage
- Update your address and/or your phone number
- Let them know if you have moved to another county or state
- Tell them if there are changes to your income or family size, or if you have had a baby
- Notify them if you get or lose other health care insurance, besides Medi-Cal
- Ask for a new Benefits Identification Card (BIC) if you lose yours

You can reach the County Medi-Cal offices at:

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

If you have Medi-Cal because you are receiving SSI benefits, call the Social Security Administration office at:

Merced **888-632-7069**
Monterey **877-696-9397**
Santa Cruz **800-780-1106**

If you have Medicare, you can call the Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) to learn about your Medicare benefits and how to use them. You can reach HICAP at:

Merced. **209-385-7550**
Monterey **831-655-1334**
Santa Cruz **831-462-5510**

Other important phone numbers to know:

The services below are covered by the Alliance:

- **Routine vision services (eye exams, glasses):** Call VSP at **800-877-7195**.

Eye glasses and routine eye exam are covered every 24 months.

- **Mental health services:** Call Beacon Health Options at **855-765-9700**.

- **Dental services:** Call the Denti-Cal program at **800-322-6384**.

Covered by the state Medi-Cal, not the Alliance.



Would you like to quit smoking? We can help!

Many former smokers say quitting was the hardest thing they ever did. However, millions of people have been able to do it, and you can too. Quitting smoking involves practice, flexibility, commitment and effort. It's OK to make mistakes; people learn something new about quitting every time they try and are much stronger the next time they try. The first step to stop smoking is learning why you feel like you need to smoke. Knowing this can prepare you to find the best ways to quit and live a smoke-free life.

There are many options to help quit smoking. There is in-person or over-

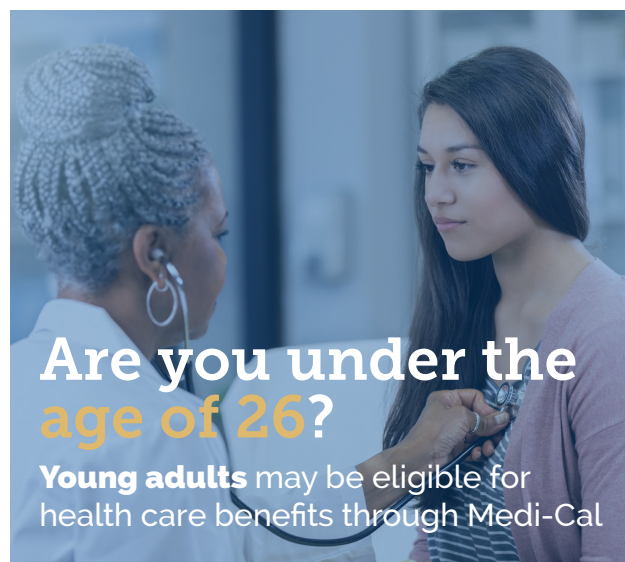


the-phone counseling that can be very effective. Smoking cessation programs help smokers manage and cope with problems they have when trying to quit. The programs teach problem-solving and other coping skills. Talk to your doctor to find the option that will work best for you.

The Alliance is committed to supporting members who wish to

stop smoking and/or using tobacco products. To achieve this, the Alliance offers members the Tobacco Cessation Support Program (TCSP). Services include:

- Referrals to the convenient, toll-free California Smokers' Helpline at **800-NO-BUTTS (800-662-8887)** and the toll-free California Vaping Helpline at **844-8-NO-VAPE (844-866-8273)**, which provides free cessation counseling over the phone for anyone in California.
- If you have the Alliance as your primary insurance, we will cover the cost for you to attend an approved smoking cessation class in your area.
- We also cover stop-smoking aids such as nicotine gum or patches.
- We can send you easy-to-read brochures with tips to help you quit smoking and/or using tobacco products.



Are you under the age of 26?

Young adults may be eligible for health care benefits through Medi-Cal

To see if you qualify, call your local county's Medi-Cal office:

MERCED COUNTY:
(209) 385-3000
www.c4yourself.com

MONTEREY COUNTY:
(877) 410-8823
www.c4yourself.com

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY:
(888) 421-8080
www.mybenefitscalwin.org

Get covered! Enroll in Medi-Cal starting **January 1, 2020.**

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
on the Alliance's TCSP, please call
the Alliance Health Education Line
at **800-700-3874, ext. 5580.**

What to do if you get a bill

As an Alliance member, you should not have to pay for covered services unless you:

- Have a Medi-Cal Share of Cost
- Are an Alliance Care IHSS member receiving a service that has a co-payment
- Go to a provider that doesn't take Alliance insurance, but you tell the provider you want to be seen there anyway and that you will pay for the services yourself
- Have Medicare and Medi-Cal and:
 - You are paying your Medicare drug co-payment.
 - You choose to see a doctor that doesn't accept Medi-Cal as your secondary insurance.

But there may be times when you get a bill. Don't ignore it. Follow these steps:

1. Call the phone number on the bill and ask why they sent it to you. They might not know what insurance you have.
2. If you were eligible with the Alliance when you got the services, tell the provider you were an Alliance member and give them your Alliance ID number. You will find this on your Alliance ID card.
3. Ask the provider to bill us for the service(s).

If you have done this but keep getting a bill, call Member Services at **800-700-3874**. Make sure you have:

- Your Alliance ID number
- The name and phone number of the provider billing you
- The account number on the bill
- Information about the service(s) you received and the date(s) you received them



- The amount of the bill

We may not be able to help you if you don't have this information. We also cannot help you with a bill that is more than one year old.

If you have other health insurance:

In most cases, your other health insurance is the primary insurance. This means that the provider bills the other insurance before billing the Alliance. If you get a bill and have other health insurance, check to make sure the provider billed your other health insurance first.

If you get retroactive Medi-Cal:

Medi-Cal beneficiaries sometimes become eligible for medical services after they receive them. The eligibility can go back to cover the services

that were provided. This is called retroactive eligibility. If you are an Alliance Medi-Cal member who received retroactive eligibility, it is your responsibility to tell the provider you now have Medi-Cal. The provider will have to bill state Medi-Cal for the retroactive period, not the Alliance. Give the provider your ID number on your Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card (BIC) so they can bill the state for the services.

WRITTEN LETTERS AND NOTICES

that affect your health care coverage are also offered in your language. We can also help you read these documents if you speak a language other than English.

Getting an appointment: How long should you have to wait?

We know it is important for you to get care when you need it. But it is not always possible for a doctor to see you right away. You may have to wait longer for some types of appointments than others. For example, you should be able to get an urgent care (care when you are sick) appointment sooner than an appointment for a regular checkup.

We work with the doctors and clinics in our network to make sure you can get care when you need it. We have always done this because we know it is important.

Health plans in California have to meet certain standards for access to care. The regulations to put this law into place are called the Timely Access to Non-emergency Health Care Services standards. There are different standards for different types of appointments.

In the chart at right are the standards for different types of appointments. The waiting times for an appointment may be longer if the provider feels that it will not harm your health if you have a longer wait.

IF YOU FEEL you are not getting care when you need it, call Member Services at **800-700-3874**.



APPOINTMENT TYPE	MUST GET APPOINTMENT WITHIN
Urgent care appointments that do not require pre-approval (prior authorization)	48 hours
Urgent care appointments that do require pre-approval (prior authorization)	96 hours
Non-urgent primary care appointments	10 business days
Non-urgent specialist	15 business days
Non-urgent mental health provider (non-doctor)	10 business days
Non-urgent appointments for ancillary services for the diagnosis or treatment of injury, illness or other health condition	15 business days
Telephone wait times during normal business hours	10 minutes
Triage—24/7 services	No more than 30 minutes
Initial pre-natal care	10 business days



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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.

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