



# Living **Healthy**

A newsletter for the members of Central  
California Alliance for Health



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## **Your behavioral health matters!**

Life's ups and downs can sometimes feel out of control, and it is OK to ask for help. Taking care of your behavioral health is important for overall wellness.

Behavioral health includes mental health, substance use and challenging behaviors.

The holidays can be a lonely or stressful time for some people. If you are feeling sad, anxious or depressed or are struggling with substance use, you are not alone! We can help.

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

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

**HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.**

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

For substance use services, contact your county's Behavioral Health department:

Mariposa County: **800-549-6741**

Merced County: **888-334-0163**

Monterey County: **888-258-6029**

San Benito County: **888-636-4020**

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

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.

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

## **Ask the doctor**

### **What should I do if I can't see my doctor right away?**

Dr. Dennis Hsieh is the Chief Medical Officer at Central California Alliance for Health.

Sometimes you get sick when your doctor's office is closed. Maybe you need help fast. If you can't see your doctor right away, you have other ways to get care.

Here are some ways to get care:

- Call your doctor's office advice line.
- Try telehealth (if your primary care doctor offers it).
- Call our Nurse Advice Line.
- Visit an urgent care clinic.

### **What is a doctor's advice line?**

Some doctor's offices have a phone line you can call when you need medical help. This line lets you talk to a healthcare worker who can answer your questions, help with your symptoms and tell you what to do next.

## **What is telehealth?**

Telehealth is when your doctor can see you on a video call. This is great for things that do not need a physical examination, such as flu symptoms and minor infections. Ask your doctor if they have this service for you.

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

If you are not sure where to go or what to do, the 24/7 Nurse Advice Line can help you. A nurse can help you decide if you need to go to urgent care, go to the emergency room or wait to see your doctor. Call **844-971-8907** (TTY: Dial **711**) to talk to a nurse. You can also visit **[www.thealliance.health/nurse-advice-line](http://www.thealliance.health/nurse-advice-line)** to learn more.

## **What are urgent care clinics?**

Urgent care is for things that are not life-threatening, like minor injuries, illnesses and infections. These clinics have long hours and offer services like x-rays and

stitches. Visit [www.thealliance.health/urgent-care](http://www.thealliance.health/urgent-care) to learn more.

### **What if I think it's serious?**

If you think you are having an emergency or something that is life-threatening, call **911** or go to the emergency room right away.

Your health is important. These options can help you get care when you need it. If you have questions, call the Alliance Member Services Department at **800-700-3874**. We're here to help!

## **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 area includes Mariposa, Merced, Monterey, San Benito 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 (IHSS) 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 can file an appeal if you disagree with our decision.

## **Prescription drugs**

If you are a Medi-Cal member, your prescription drugs that are filled at a pharmacy are covered by Medi-Cal Rx and not the Alliance. To find out if a drug is covered, call **800-977-2273** (TTY: Dial **711**) or go to **[www.medi-calrx.dhcs.ca.gov](http://www.medi-calrx.dhcs.ca.gov)**.

If you are an IHSS member, pharmacy services are managed by MedImpact. You can view the list of covered drugs at **[www.thealliance.health/prescriptions](http://www.thealliance.health/prescriptions)**. You



can request a mailed copy by calling Member Services at **800-700-3874** (TTY: Dial **711**). You can also call Member Services if you have questions about if a drug is covered.

### **Drugs given in a doctor's office or clinic**

These are considered physician-administered drugs. You can view the list of covered drugs and any changes to the list at **[www.thealliance.health/prescriptions](http://www.thealliance.health/prescriptions)**. If you would like a mailed copy, please call Member Services at **800-700-3874** (TTY: Dial **711**).

## **Wellness for all**

### **It's not too late to protect yourself from the flu!**

The winter season is here, which means that flu season is in full swing. From September to May, the flu is more likely to spread. This is why getting your flu vaccine each year is important to staying healthy through the winter months.

The flu is more than just a regular cold. It can be more dangerous for older people, young kids, pregnant women, and those with health conditions such as diabetes or asthma.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 6 months and older get the flu vaccine every year. Children 6 months to 8 years old need two flu doses if it's their first time. They should get the second dose about a month after the first one.

### **Good news for parents!**

Alliance members ages 7 to 24 months who get their two flu vaccine doses between September 2024 and May 2025 will be entered into a monthly raffle for a chance to win a **\$100 Target gift card!**

If you are pregnant, getting the flu vaccine is very important. It helps protect you and your baby before and after birth.

### **Wondering where to get your flu vaccine?**

Try your doctor's office or your county public health office. You might be able to walk in, but it's best to make an appointment. If you are over 19, you can get a flu vaccine at your local pharmacy. Ask if you need to make an appointment.

Getting your flu vaccine isn't just good for you, it's good for everyone! It helps stop the flu from spreading and keeps you, your friends, and your family safe and healthy.

## **Alternative formats**

Alliance members, did you know you can get your written information in different formats? These formats can help you if you have trouble seeing or hearing. Examples of alternative formats are:

**Braille**—small bumps or raised dots you can feel to read if you are blind or have low vision.

**Audio or data CD**—a CD you can listen to on a computer or a CD player if reading is hard for you.

**Large print**—bigger letters to help you if you have trouble reading small text.

## **Want to try it?**

The Alliance member newsletter is available on our website in large print and audio format. If you would like other written information in an alternative format, call Alliance Member Services at **800-700-3874** (TTY: Dial **711**), 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## **Get Care Management services to help you!**

It can be tricky to keep track of your health care when you are seeing different doctors or getting care from different places. If you need help with your medical care, prescriptions and behavioral health services, the Alliance can help. Here's how:

- **After the hospital.** Did you just come home from the hospital? We help with follow-up appointments and medicines.
- **Getting to appointments.** Need a ride to see the doctor? We can help set up free rides for you.
- **Special care management.** Need more help? We offer Complex Care Management services.

For more information and help in your own language, call our Care Management team at **800-700-3874** (TTY: Dial **711**). You can also call Alliance Member Services at the same number, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5:30

p.m. For the Hearing or Speech Assistance Line, call **800-735-2929** (TTY: Dial **711**).

## **Community Corner**

### **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)**.

## **Stay safe when mixing antipsychotics and opioids!**

It's important to be careful when you take antipsychotics with opioids.

Here are some tips on how to use both safely:

- **Never stop your medicine without talking to your doctor first.** Stopping suddenly can cause withdrawal symptoms.
- **Call 911 right away if you:**
  1. Feel sick while also feeling grumpy.
  2. Feel confused.
  3. Feel like your heart is beating too fast.
  4. Feel like your muscles are stiff or they twitch.
  5. Are sweating, have a high fever, have seizures, feel cold or throw up.
  6. Have trouble breathing, feel like you might pass out, feel dizzy or have a hard time staying awake.

- **Do not drive or use machines.** When you use opioids and antipsychotics together, it might affect how well you move, react or make decisions.
- **Ask your doctor about getting naloxone (Narcan).** You can also get it at any Alliance office. Narcan can save lives if someone has taken too many opioids.
- **Talk to your doctor** about using less opioid medicine or using opioids that aren't as strong.

## **Common antipsychotics**

Antipsychotics help treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and other mental health concerns. Examples include:

- Chlorpromazine (Thorazine).
- Clozapine (Clozaril).
- Olanzapine (Zyprexa).
- Quetiapine (Seroquel).
- Aripiprazole (Abilify).



- Haloperidol (Haldol).
- Lurasidone (Latuda).
- Risperidone (Risperdal).
- Ziprasidone (Geodon).

## **Common opioids**

Opioids are strong pain medicines. If you take any of the above medicines with opioids, take extra steps to stay safe. Some examples of opioids are:

- Hydrocodone-APAP (Lortab, Lorcet).
- Hydromorphone (Dilaudid).
- Morphine (MS Contin, Kadian).
- Oxycodone (Oxycontin).
- Oxycodone-APAP (Percocet, Endocet).

**Have questions?** Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

## **Benefit spotlight**

### **Health resources and self-management tools**

At the Alliance, we care about your health. That's why our health education programs give Alliance members the tools to be as healthy as possible.

The Alliance offers self-management tools to help you and your family learn about different health topics. These tools are available on the [Health and Wellness](#) website for the following topics:

### **Healthy eating, healthy weight, physical activity**

#### ***Self-management tools for children and teens***

These tools include a personalized eating plan, BMI calculator for children and teens, and a physical activity planner. They can be used any time to help with maintaining a healthy weight, eating healthy and encouraging physical activity with your family.

#### ***Self-management tools for adults***

These tools include a personalized eating plan, physical activity planner and healthy weight assessment. They can be used any time to provide help with maintaining a healthy weight, eating healthy and fitting physical activity into your week.

## **Depression, managing stress, avoiding at-risk drinking**

### ***Self-management tools for adults***

These tools include a depression self-test, resources for managing stress and a tool to check drinking habits. Use each tool to search for the topics that impact you. If you feel you need more help, talk to your doctor.

## **Quitting tobacco**

### ***Self-management tools for adults***

These tools include a quit plan and self-help materials to provide help with quitting tobacco and/or smoking.

Visit the Alliance's Health and Wellness website to find the self-management tools at

**[www.thealliance.health/health-and-wellness](http://www.thealliance.health/health-and-wellness)**. For more information about self-management tools or health education programs, 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**).

## **Protecting your privacy**

Your health information is private, and we want to keep it safe. Sometimes we might need to share it, and sometimes you can choose what you want to share.

## **When we might share information**

We might share your health information to help with your treatments or payments without asking you first. For example, we might tell a doctor you are an Alliance member so they can treat you. There are other times when we might share information and not ask you. These are set by law.

## **When you decide to share information**

If someone asks us for your health information, you need to say if it's OK before we give it to them. You also get to say if it's OK before we share your information with apps on your phone or computer.

We often check how we keep your health information safe. We want to provide you quality health care and protect your information.

## **Learn more**

To learn more about how we keep your health information private, look at the Notice of Privacy Practices in your Member Handbook. It is also available on our website at **[www.thealliance.health/privacy-practices](http://www.thealliance.health/privacy-practices)**.

## **We are texting members!**

The Alliance texts members to help them keep up to date on Alliance benefits and services. Alliance texts are from the short code **59849**. To learn more, visit our website at **[www.thealliance.health/member-texting](http://www.thealliance.health/member-texting)**.