



Living **Healthy**

A newsletter for the members of Central
California Alliance for Health



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Protect yourself and your family this flu season

Flu season is September through May. The best way to protect yourself and your family is to get your flu vaccine early, before the flu starts to spread in your community.

The flu vaccine can help stop serious illness from the flu. People who are at higher risk of having serious flu complications are:

- Young children.
- People who are pregnant.
- People with certain chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes, and heart or lung disease.
- People who are ages 65 and older.

Getting the flu vaccine is free and easy. Everyone ages 6 months and older can get it every year. Children can get

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the flu vaccine from their doctor. Adults have the option to get the flu vaccine at a pharmacy without a referral.

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!**

For more information, visit www.thealliance.health/flu.

Ask the doctor

What to know about vaccines for children

Dr. Omar Guzmán is the Chief Health Equity Officer at Central California Alliance for Health. He is a board-certified emergency medicine physician, born and raised in the Central Valley.

Are vaccines safe for my child?

Yes, they are safe. Millions of children safely receive vaccines each year. As an emergency room doctor, I see more serious illnesses in children who were not

vaccinated than in children who had rare reactions to a vaccine. It saddens me when a sick baby comes into the emergency room in the middle of the night. It's even scarier when the child is not protected by vaccines. Vaccines protect kids from many diseases. Some of those diseases can be especially dangerous for young kids.

What are the side effects of vaccines?

The usual side effects we see are minor, like low-grade fever, fussiness or soreness where the vaccine was given. These side effects usually last a few days and go away on their own.

Can vaccines overload my baby's immune system?

No. Babies are exposed to thousands of germs every day after they are born. The germs have antigens that cause a baby's immune system to start protecting them.

Vaccines also have antigens, but only a tiny amount.

Babies are exposed to more antigens in their everyday

environment, so vaccines could never overload a baby's immune system.

Why do vaccines start so early?

The youngest children have the highest risk for complications, hospitalizations or death from preventable diseases. Kids can develop strong immune systems from vaccines and be protected from serious illnesses. At work, when a sick kid comes in, I try to do what is best for them as a doctor. But at home, I'm Dad, and hearing my kids cry breaks my heart. My six kids at home have all been vaccinated, so I understand how hard it can be on parents to take their babies to get vaccines so early in life, but I also understand why it is so important.

What do you think of delaying some vaccines or following a nonstandard schedule?

It can feel like a lot of vaccines, but vaccines are scheduled this way for a reason.

The schedule of vaccines gives your baby the most protection when they are most at risk. Delaying vaccines leaves your baby unprotected.

The Alliance has created an Infant Wellness Map to help you remember your baby's appointments. You can view it at www.thealliance.health/infantwellnessmap. You can request a printed copy of the Infant Wellness Map by calling **800-700-3874, ext. 5580**.

We also have rewards for keeping up with your baby's checkups. Learn more at www.thealliance.health/healthrewards.

What to know about prescription drugs

If you are a Medi-Cal member, your prescription drugs that are filled at a pharmacy are covered by Medi-Cal Rx, 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.

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**. You can also 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 a medication.

Drugs given in a doctor's office or clinic

These are considered physician-administered drugs (PAD). You can view the list of covered drugs and any changes to the list at

www.thealliance.health/prescriptions. If you would like a mailed copy, please contact Member Services at **800-700-3874** (TTY: Dial **711**).

Benefit spotlight

Healthy Moms and Healthy Babies Program

The Alliance's *Healthy Moms and Healthy Babies* (HMHB) Program helps pregnant women get early prenatal and postpartum care. HMHB also provides education to support you in having a healthy pregnancy.

Members enrolled in the HMHB Program are contacted by Alliance health educators. Health educators provide information on a variety of topics, including prenatal and postpartum health, breastfeeding, pediatric care and parenting.

Get health rewards!

The Alliance offers members health rewards for seeing the doctor for prenatal and postpartum care. Alliance members who see their doctor within the first 13 weeks of being pregnant are entered into a raffle for a chance to win a **\$50 Target gift card**. Members who see their

doctor 1 to 12 weeks after having a baby will receive a **\$25 Target gift card.**

Once your baby is born, the Alliance also offers health rewards for taking your baby to the doctor for regular checkups. For more information about health rewards available for you and your baby, visit

www.thealliance.health/healthrewards or 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**).

Community resources

The Alliance also provides pregnant and postpartum members with information about community resources, including the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC). WIC is a nutrition education program that helps individuals who are pregnant or just had a baby and children up to age 5. For more information on the WIC program, visit **www.myfamily.wic.ca.gov** or call **800-852-5770**.

Our Your Health Matters (YHM) outreach team will be coming to community events in your area! Alliance staff can help you learn about Medi-Cal benefits, Alliance services and your local organizations in person. See our calendar of events at **www.thealliance.health/communityevents**.

Heart health and statins

Statins are a type of medicine that treats high cholesterol levels. Statins also reduce the risk of a heart attack and stroke. Some examples of statins include atorvastatin (Lipitor), rosuvastatin (Crestor) and simvastatin (Zocor).

Statins can help people who have:

- Been diagnosed with heart disease.
- Had a heart attack or stroke.
- A stent.
- Plaque in their body.

Statins are also recommended for people who may be at risk for other conditions. Examples include a family history of high cholesterol, heart disease or diabetes.

The most common side effects of taking statins are muscle pain and weakness. But statins are not always the reason behind muscle pains. If you are experiencing muscle pain and weakness, tell your doctor. Your doctor may have you stop taking the statin for a month to see if the pain goes away. Or your doctor may switch you to another statin or change your dose.

Ask your doctor first before making any changes to your medication. Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to stop. It is important to take your statin medicine as prescribed by your doctor.

Pay attention to any warnings that come with your medication. Certain medicines, and even grapefruit juice, can affect how well statins work. Always let your doctor know when you start a new medication.

The Alliance's American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services

Did you know the Alliance offers American Sign Language (ASL) services for Alliance members who are deaf or hard of hearing?

We work hard to ensure that all Alliance members can communicate with their primary care provider (PCP) about their health care needs. We can help schedule an ASL interpreter to be present 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**).

Living healthy with diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic health condition that affects how well your body turns food into energy. With diabetes, your

body either does not make enough insulin or cannot use it as well as it should.

Diabetes is not something that goes away by itself. You can live a healthy life with diabetes. Here are some things you can do.

See your doctor regularly. You will need to have checkups with your doctor on a regular basis. Your doctor will review your progress and adjust your care if needed. Make sure to keep your appointments.

We have transportation services for you to use if you need help getting to your doctor visits. Call us at least five business days before your appointment at **800-700-3874, ext. 5577**, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Follow the instructions your doctor gives you to manage diabetes. This includes taking medicine your doctor prescribes for your diabetes care.

Adopt a healthy lifestyle. These habits can help you live a healthy lifestyle:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat healthy food.
- Be active.

Learn about how to manage your diabetes and get support. Our Care Management services can help you make sure you understand your diagnosis and have everything you need to start managing it. Call **800-700-3874, ext. 5512**.

We offer the *Live Better with Diabetes* Program, where you will learn about healthy eating, staying active, improving your quality of life and more! To join or learn more about our six-week workshop, call our Health Education Line at **800-700-3874, ext. 5580**.

Women: Get screened for breast cancer

A breast cancer screening is also called a mammogram. Doctors have studied how often a woman should get screened for breast cancer. These studies show that women between the ages of 40 and 74 should get a screening every two years.

If you are younger than 40 or older than 75, please talk with your doctor about what they would recommend.

Why screening is important

Getting a breast cancer screening is really important because breast cancer can show up very quickly. Breast cancer can be treated if found early. Getting a screening less than every two years could result in missing breast cancer if it shows up. This makes the cancer harder to treat.

If you have had a breast cancer screening in the last two years but feel a lump in your breast or have any other

concerns, please talk to your doctor immediately. They will let you know if you should get screened again.

Talk to your doctor today about getting a breast cancer screening. If you are having trouble getting in to see your doctor or getting a screening, please call our Member Services department at **800-700-3874**. We can help you get scheduled for your breast cancer screening.

For more information on how breast cancer screening saves lives, visit **www.thealliance.health/breast-cancer-screening-saves-lives**.

Help your child have a healthy weight

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month

One in five children in the United States is obese.

Childhood obesity puts kids at risk for health problems like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

The good news is that childhood obesity can be prevented. In honor of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, the Alliance encourages your family to make healthy changes together.

Ways to be healthier

Taking small steps as a family can help your child stay at a healthy weight. Below are some ideas for your family to be healthier, together.

- **Get active.** Walk around the neighborhood, go on a bike ride or play outside.
- **Limit screen time.** Keep extra screen time (such as playing video games or watching TV) to two hours a day or less.
- **Make healthy meals.** Buy and serve more vegetables, fruits and whole-grain foods.

Rewards and programs

The Alliance offers the *Healthy Weight for Life* Program. This program is for children and teens ages 2 to 18 who

want to reach a healthy weight. The *Healthy Weight for Life* Program can help your child learn how to eat healthy and be more active. You can also learn tools to support your child with lifestyle changes.

Talk to your child's doctor about this program. The doctor can refer your child to the program if they think your child needs it.

We also have support for adults who want to reach a healthy weight! Members 19 years of age and older can join our adult weight management program.

Questions? For information on our health programs, call the Alliance Health Education Line at **800-700-3874, ext. 5580** or visit **www.thealliance.health/health-and-wellness**.

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