

# living

A newsletter for the members of  
Central Coast Alliance for Health



## things to know

### Don't forget your flu shot!

Flu season is coming. Get a shot so that you don't get sick with the flu.

Flu shots are usually available from your doctor starting in October or November of each year.

If you or your child has asthma, diabetes, heart disease or certain other medical conditions, getting the flu can be dangerous.

Call your doctor's office today to see if you need a flu shot. Flu shots are an Alliance benefit available from your doctor.



## things to know

### Please keep in touch

If your address or phone number has changed, please call us at **1-800-700-3874, ext. 4396**. Please help us serve you better by keeping in touch with us!

# Medication coverage update

The Alliance formulary is the list of medications that are covered by the plan. If your doctor wants to prescribe a drug that is not on the list, he or she must fill out a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR).

From time to time, the Alliance changes the formulary. Listed below are some medications that have been recently added to the formulary.

With a few exceptions, Alliance policy requires that pharmacies use generic drugs if available. The complete formulary is on the Alliance Web site at [www.ccah-alliance.org/formulary.htm](http://www.ccah-alliance.org/formulary.htm).



Name of medication added to formulary	Condition it is used to treat
Mirtazapine (Remeron) Spiriva inhaler	Depression Asthma

Central Coast Alliance for Health

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## Let's work together for good health care

With teamwork, lots of things are easier, including good health care.

That's why we try hard to meet your needs, and we ask that you work with us. When we both do our parts, you get the best care possible.

### **We agree to:**

- Offer you the services you need.
- Allow you to choose your own doctor.
- Let you take part in decisions about your health care.
- Get a second opinion when you'd like one.
- Let you refuse care when you wish to.
- Treat you with respect.
- Keep your records private.
- Let you see your records and make changes when needed.
- Give you details about your health plan.
- Answer your questions quickly and honestly.
- Let you file a complaint.

### **In return, we ask that you:**

- Read all of your member materials.

- Do your best to keep your appointments or cancel them as early as you can.
- Take your member ID card with you each time you go to the doctor.
- Give honest and complete information to your medical team and us.
- Follow the treatment plan that you and your doctor agree to.
- Ask questions if you don't understand what your doctor has told you.

*When we both do our parts, you get the best care possible.*

- Practice good health habits and take part in programs meant to help keep you well.
- Tell us about other health insurance you might have.
- Contact member services if you don't understand how to use your benefits.

See your member handbook for more information about your rights and responsibilities.

## Turn to WIC for better nutrition

Eating well can help you and your kids stay healthy.

But that isn't always easy. Sometimes you need some extra help to get the foods that are good for your family and to learn more about proper nutrition. That's where WIC can help.

WIC stands for Women, Infants and Children. It's a government program that can help you and your kids eat better.

WIC may:

- Provide you with ways to get healthy foods.
- Teach you about eating well.
- Help you with breast-feeding.

Everyone in your family can benefit when you take part in the program.

To qualify for WIC, you must meet certain income guidelines. You must also have a need for better nutrition. Those who may be eligible include:

- Pregnant women.
- Women who are breastfeeding.
- Children younger than 5.

If you think WIC could help you or your family, talk to your doctor.

You may also visit this Web site, [www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic), for more information.



# Healthy eating on a budget

A healthy diet doesn't have to cost a lot.

Try these tips for a diet that's good for your body and your budget:

- Plan meals. Build them around rice, noodles or whole grains.
- Check newspapers for grocery sale ads. Plan meals based on healthy sale items.
- Look for coupons, but only for things you would have bought anyway.
- Shop with a list and stick to it.
- Don't go grocery shopping when you're hungry. You may be tempted to buy foods, such as chips and cookies, that aren't healthy.
- Compare prices for fresh, frozen and canned foods. Look for specials. Fresh fruits and vegetables may cost less when



they are in season. Large bags of frozen vegetables don't cost a lot and they keep well.

- Use dry beans or peas instead of meat in some dishes. They're healthy foods, have less fat

and cost less.

- Compare prices for national, generic and store brands.

Planning a healthy diet may take a little more time, but it pays off with better health.

## More than the 'baby blues'

Being a new mom is hard work. No matter how excited you are to have a baby, it's normal to feel confused or moody for a few days.

But if these feelings get stronger, it may be more serious. If you feel depressed for more than two weeks, you may have postpartum depression.

You may have this illness if you:

- Have lost interest in your life.
- Are often not hungry.
- Have a hard time going to sleep or staying asleep.
- Sleep more than usual.
- Feel worthless, hopeless or guilty.
- Think about hurting yourself or your baby.
- Cry a lot.

If you think you may have this illness, talk to your doctor. Counseling and/or medicines can help. Without treatment, the illness

may get worse or last longer.

### Help yourself

Lots of new moms feel sad. But you can help take care of yourself:

- Talk to someone about your feelings.
- Get help with child care, chores and errands.
- Do something for yourself every day. Try reading, exercising or taking a relaxing bath.
- Write about how you feel in a journal.



## Help your child handle asthma

If your child has asthma, he or she can still lead a normal, active life. But it's important that you provide a lot of support.

Many children deal with asthma better than parents do.

Take care to handle any feelings of fear or guilt you might have so you don't pass them on to your child. And give your child lots of love and understanding.

### A team effort

You and your child need to know that asthma can be managed. Make sure your child:

- Has regular medical care.
- Takes medicines at the right times.
- Knows what brings on asthma attacks.

### Your role

When helping your child deal with asthma:

- Be open and honest.

- Give your child some freedom. For example, let your child play sports if he or she has an interest.
- Over time, let your child help make more decisions about his or her own health.
- Don't treat your child differently than other kids.
- Make sure your child knows the health risks of asthma.

If your child understands how to manage asthma, he or she is more likely to make good decisions. Your child will also learn that asthma doesn't have to limit what he or she can do.

Source: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology



To learn more about Alliance asthma education benefits, please call 1-800-700-3874, ext. 4441.

## Work with your doctor to control your asthma

Your doctor can help you stay healthy if you have asthma.

You need to talk to your doctor regularly, even if you feel OK. He or she will check your treatment plan and make sure it is working.

Also, your asthma can change. You may have different symptoms or triggers. Tell your doctor if:

- You can't sleep at night because you have problems breathing.
- Your asthma makes daily activities hard.
- You have to take more medicine than your doctor said you should.

You may only need a change in your asthma medicines to feel better. Or you may need new medicines that will work better.

Remember, your doctor can help you take care of your asthma so it doesn't slow you down.

## More than a frog in the throat

Ahem.

If you hear this from your child a lot, it may be more than a habit. Frequent throat clearing may be a sign that your child has asthma. Asthma is a serious disease that makes breathing hard.

You may know that asthma can make kids cough and wheeze. It

can make them short of breath and give them a feeling of chest tightness too.

But scientists have found that kids who often cleared their throats—but had no other asthma symptoms—had asthma.

Take your child to the doctor if he or she has any signs of asthma.





# Getting mental health care

Know what to expect beforehand

## Alliance Medi-Cal members:

Mental health care (visits to psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, etc.) is a Medi-Cal benefit but is not provided through the Alliance. Each county in California is responsible for providing mental health care services to its residents who are on Medi-Cal.

● If you are an Alliance Medi-Cal member and live in Santa Cruz County, you can reach the **Santa Cruz County Mental Health Plan** toll-free at **1-800-952-2335**.

● If you are an Alliance Medi-Cal member and live in Monterey County, you can reach the **Monterey County Behavioral Health Department** toll-free at **1-888-258-6029** or **(831) 796-3066**.

When you call, please tell the person who answers that you are a Medi-Cal recipient and that you are calling for mental health services.

If you are already a client of either of these Santa Cruz or Monterey county health departments, you may call these numbers if you have questions or need help with something related to your mental health care.

## Alliance Healthy Families members:

If you are an Alliance Healthy Families member, mental health care is a covered benefit under the Alliance.

To get mental health services, call **Managed Health Network (MHN)** toll-free at **1-800-327-0449**. Please tell them you are an Alliance Healthy Families member.

They will give you the names and phone numbers of providers in your area, depending on the type of care you need. You will then need to call a provider and make an appointment.

Please remember to bring your Alliance ID card with you. There will be a \$5 co-payment for each visit.

There is a limit to the number of visits you can have in any one benefit year. Please see your *Healthy Families Evidence of Coverage* for more information.

## Alliance Healthy Kids members:

If you are an Alliance Healthy Kids member, mental health care is also a covered benefit under the Alliance.

To get mental health services,

call the **Santa Cruz County Mental Health Plan** toll-free at **1-800-952-2335**. Please tell them you are an Alliance Healthy Kids member.

They will give you the names and phone numbers of providers in your area, depending on the type of care you need. You will then need to call a provider and make an appointment.

*You do not need a referral to get mental health services.*

Please remember to bring your Alliance ID card with you. There will be a \$5 co-payment for each visit.

There is a limit to the number of visits you can have in any one benefit year. Please see your *Healthy Kids Evidence of Coverage* for more information.

## For all Alliance members:

**You do not need a referral from your Alliance Primary Care Provider (PCP) to get mental health services.**

If you want your mental health provider to be able to talk to your PCP to coordinate the care you are getting, please let him or her know who your PCP is.



## Talking to your partner about STDs

If you are having sex, part of a healthy relationship means being a healthy partner. So talk to your partner about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These are infections that are passed from person to person during sex.

Sit down and have an open talk. Both of you need to be honest about your sexual histories. You need to know if you're at risk of getting an STD.

Ask your partner these questions:

- How many sex partners have you had in the last seven years?
- Have you recently had a blood transfusion or slept with someone who did?
- Have you ever used drugs with a needle (IV drugs)?
- Have you ever had sex with an IV drug user?

### Protect yourself

To reduce your risk of STDs, take these steps:

- Limit your number of sex partners. The fewer partners you and your partner have, the lower your risk of getting an STD.

*You need to know if you're at risk of getting an STD.*

- Use a latex condom every time you have sex.
- Use a birth control cream, jelly or foam. These contain a chemical that may help protect against some STDs.

If you think you have an STD, get tested and treated right away. Your partner should do the same. Avoid having sex until treatment is done.

Sources: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; *Talking About Sex* (American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1995)

### STD hotline

To find out more about STDs, call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National AIDS/STD Hotline. You can get free information about:

- How people get STDs.
- How to prevent STDs.
- Treating STDs.

For information in English, call 1-800-227-8922; for Spanish, call 1-800-344-7432.

### Chlamydia screening for women

When you're sick, you often know it. You just don't feel good.

But you could have a sexually transmitted disease called chlamydia. And you might not know it.

Chlamydia may only have mild signs or none at all. But it is a serious disease.

Left untreated, chlamydia could harm your sex organs. And it may make it harder to get pregnant.

If you're younger than 25 and sexually active, you should be tested each year.

Getting tested protects your partner too. Men can also get chlamydia.

Talk to your doctor.

Source: National Women's Health Information Center