

living

A newsletter for the members of
Central Coast Alliance for Health



**CENTRAL COAST
ALLIANCE
FOR HEALTH**

things to know

Good questions for your good health

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?



Source: Ask Me 3 © Partnership for Clear Health Communication

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Make the most of your doctor visit

When you go to your doctor, it's good to prepare.

It's hard to remember everything you want to tell or ask your doctor. So before you go, write down your symptoms. Be as specific as you can. The more your doctor knows about you, the easier it will be to help you. Writing any questions you have is a good idea, too.

Your doctor may have questions for you also. He or she may ask about medicines you take, for example, or about whether you smoke or drink. Be honest. Hiding things makes it harder to get good care.

Ask your doctor to explain anything you don't understand. You may find it helpful to take



notes. Bring a paper and pen so you can write down what the doctor says.



Call 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580, for a free reminder card to take to your visit.

Central Coast Alliance for Health

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Compliments or complaints?
Call Member Services.
1-800-700-3874, ext. 5505



Choosing and changing your primary doctor

Most Alliance members have a Primary Care Provider, or PCP for short. This is your main doctor.

The name, address and phone number of your PCP is on your Alliance ID card. If the name of a clinic is on your card rather than a doctor's name, you can see any doctor at that clinic.

How you get a Primary Care Provider

When you first become an Alliance member, we mail you a packet of information. It includes a *Provider Directory* that lists all doctors and clinics in our health plan. The welcome letter with that packet asks you to choose a PCP.

You can tell us either by mail or phone which doctor or clinic you want as your PCP. If you don't choose a PCP during your first month on our health plan, we will assign you to one.

Your PCP's role in your care

Your PCP oversees all of your medical care. Your doctor also helps teach you how to stay well and prevent disease. If you need special care or tests, your PCP must refer you.

What to do if you want a different doctor

If you don't want the doctor on your Alliance card as your PCP, you must call Member Services to change to a different one. You can't just go to another doctor.

When you call, we will tell you which doctors and clinics near you are taking new patients. When you change PCPs, you can start seeing the new one the first of the next month.

If you don't know who your PCP is, just call Member Services and ask.

How to talk with your doctor in your language

It is important that you can talk to your doctor easily. There are doctors in our network who speak languages other than English.

Your *Provider Directory* says which language each doctor speaks. It may be the doctor who speaks the other language. Or it may be someone else in the doctor's office. You can call their office and ask.

If you have trouble talking with your doctor because you speak different languages, you don't have to use family or friends to interpret for you. We can help.

Your doctor can call a special telephone line to get an interpreter who speaks your language. Then you and your doctor will talk through the interpreter.

How the interpreter service works

When you make an appointment with your doctor, say you want an interpreter. Also tell them what language you speak.

When you go to your appointment, the doctor will call the language line. The Alliance pays for this service, so interpreter services are free to you.



Change coming if you have Medicare and Medi-Cal



If you have *both* Medicare and Medi-Cal, it is Medi-Cal that pays for most of your drugs now. Starting January 1, 2006, Medicare will pay for your drugs instead.

Q. Why is it changing?

A. Congress passed a law called the Medicare Modernization Act. It means a new Medicare benefit for drugs. So starting next year, Medicare will cover your prescriptions. That is why the Alliance will no longer pay for them.

Q. What will happen when?

A. Medicare will mail their drug plan information to you in October. It will show which plans are available in your area. You must sign up for a plan by December. If you do not, Medicare will enroll you in a plan automatically.

Q. How will I know which plan to pick?

A. Each Medicare drug plan can cover different drugs. It will be important for you to look at the plan information carefully. Ask your doctor the brand and generic names for each drug you

take. This will help you choose the best plan for you.

Q. How will I get medicine then?

A. Your new Medicare drug plan will send you a card. Starting January 1, 2006, you will need to show that card at the pharmacy, not your Alliance card.

Q. Will anything else change?

A. You will pay a small co-payment for your prescriptions. Read your new Medicare drug plan information to find out how much.

Q. What if I still have questions?

A. Call Medicare at **1-800-633-4227**. You can also check their Web site at www.medicare.gov.

New phone numbers for Member Services

We've moved our main office to 1600 Green Hills Road in Scotts Valley. The new local phone number for Member Services is **831-430-5505**. The toll-free number is **1-800-700-3874, ext. 5505**.

Other offices

Our Salinas office is at 1000 S. Main St., Suite 313, phone: **831-755-8220, ext. 5505**.

Our Watsonville office is at 119 W. Beach St., phone: **1-800-700-3874, ext. 7038**.

Drug formulary update

Medication added	Used to treat
Optivar	Eye allergy
Astelin	Nasal (nose) allergy
Clindamycin gel	Acne
Ketoconazole 2% solution	Fungus on skin
Panafil ointment	Wounds





Help your child reach a healthy weight

These days more and more kids are overweight. That's something to be concerned about.

When kids weigh too much, they might not feel good about themselves. And being overweight can raise their risk for a number of health problems.

If you think your child is overweight, talk to his or her doctor. It's not good to put a child on a diet unless the doctor tells you to.

If the doctor says your son or daughter does need to lose a few pounds, these tips may help:

Make it a family affair. Don't focus on changing the habits of just your overweight child. Instead, think of this as a time to help the whole family. All of you can benefit from eating better and being more active.

Be active with your children. Go bicycling after dinner, for instance. Kids may look forward to exercise if it's

something that's fun for them.

Plan healthy meals. Serve plenty of fruits and vegetables. Try to cut back on portion sizes and foods high in fat, and don't have fast food often.

Eat together. Kids learn about good nutrition by watching what and how you eat.

Limit down time. Don't let your kids spend more than two hours each day watching TV or playing computer games.

Above all else, make it clear that you love your child no matter how much he or she weighs. Your support will mean a lot.

Sources: Institute of Medicine; National Institutes of Health



Call 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580, for a free brochure, "Healthy Weight and Your Child."

Limit how much soda kids drink

One way to help keep kids from gaining weight may be to limit how much soda they drink.

A large soda may contain hundreds of calories. Even if you drink just a few sodas a week, those calories add up. Before you know it, those calories put on pounds.

Soft drinks may be OK once in a while. But most of the time it's better for your kids to have healthier drinks. Water is a good choice. So is milk—it's loaded with nutrients and calcium that can help your kids have healthy teeth and bones.

Source: American Dietetic Association



Snack attack: Make it healthy

Between-meal snacking isn't a bad thing when it's done right.

Some snacks can actually be good for your family. To make sure your kids snack wisely, keep foods that are good for them in your home. Healthy choices include:

- Fruit.
- Fresh vegetables, such as baby carrots or cucumbers.
- Low-fat cheese.
- Peanut butter on crackers.
- Low-fat yogurt.
- Low-fat pudding.
- Fig bars.
- Whole-wheat toast with peanut butter.

Sources: American Dietetic Association; Baylor College of Medicine



Protect yourself from colds and flu

It can be hard to avoid all those cold and flu germs when everyone around you is coughing and sneezing. But there are at least two ways to protect yourself:

1. Get a flu shot.
2. Wash your hands.

The yearly vaccine is the best defense against the flu. People with asthma, diabetes or other health problems should get a flu shot every year. Most people 65 and older, children ages 6 to 23 months and pregnant women should get one, too. Ask your doctor if the flu shot is right for you.

Sadly, there's no vaccine to protect against a cold. Instead, the best way to avoid cold germs is to wash your hands often.

Use soap and water and rub your hands for 15 to 20 seconds. (That's probably longer than you think. You can sing the "Happy Birthday" song about twice in that time.)

Here are other ways to avoid cold and flu germs:

- Stay away from sick people when you can.

- Don't touch your nose, eyes or mouth.
- Use disinfectant to clean surfaces that sick people have touched.

If you have a cold or the flu, don't spread it. When you sneeze or cough, use a tissue and then throw it away. Teach this to your kids. If you don't have a tissue, cover your nose or mouth with your hand or arm. Then wash your hands.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Walk 10,000 steps a day, and you can count on better health. Call 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580, for a free pedometer to count your steps.

Step right up to better health

You can get in better shape, lose weight and feel great all by doing one simple thing: walking.

Walking is a great way to relax, ease stress and, of course, get from here to there.

Get going

All you need to get started is a sturdy pair of walking shoes. If you're going to buy a pair, they don't have to be expensive. Look for shoes with



good arch supports, flexible soles and a heel slightly higher than the sole. Then dress for the weather, do some light stretching and hit the road.

To get the most out of your walk:

- Move fast enough so you breathe deeper and your heart rate picks up.
- Hold your head up, keep your back straight and swing your arms loosely.
- Point your toes straight ahead.
- Step off the ball of your foot, land on your heel, roll forward and step again.

- Try walking 20 minutes four or five times a week at a comfortable pace. Adjust the time if that seems too easy or too hard.

- Add 10 minutes after a month.

Aim to walk three miles in 45 minutes. This is a good long-term goal.

If you have no major health problems, walking poses little risk. If you have high blood pressure, heart problems or other concerns, check with your doctor first.

Source: President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

Which medical tests do you need?



Why go to the doctor if you feel fine?

Because you want to make sure you keep feeling that way.

Men are famous for not wanting to go to the doctor. But they need to. Your doctor makes

 Check out "Men's Health," under "Health Topics," on Medline Plus: www.medlineplus.gov.

sure you get all the tests you need. These screenings can help protect your health.

The basics

Tests most men need include: **Blood pressure checks** at least every two years.

Cholesterol tests starting at age 35. Get your levels checked every five years. Unhealthy levels increase your risk for heart disease. You should start

the tests at age 20 if:

- You smoke.
- You have diabetes.
- Heart disease runs in your family.

Colorectal cancer tests starting at age 50. There are different types of tests, so ask your doctor which is best for you.

Other tests

Depending on your health, you may need:

Prostate cancer tests starting at age 50. But there are pros and cons to the tests. Some men choose not to have them. Ask your doctor to explain the risks and benefits.

Depression screening if you feel "down" for two weeks in a row. Your doctor can screen for this disease and treat it.

Diabetes tests if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

Sexually transmitted disease screening if you or your partner has had sex with more than one person.

Sources: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; American Cancer Society; American Medical Association

Everyday health

Health is an everyday thing. It all matters—what you do, how you eat and how you act.

So here are some day-to-day ways to stay well:

- Stay at a healthy weight. This can help protect you from diabetes, heart disease and stroke.
- Try for 30 minutes of exercise

on most days. Walking, swimming or jogging are good choices. Chores such as vacuuming and cutting the grass count too.

- Cut back on red meat, cheese and whole-milk items. Eat more fruits, vegetables and whole-grain items.
- Practice good safety habits. Wear a seat belt in the car, a helmet when you ride a bike and sunscreen when outdoors.

- Cope with stress by relaxing with a hobby, talking with friends or taking a break.

- Don't smoke.

See your doctor if you need help quitting.

- Visit your doctor regularly for checkups.

Sources: American Medical Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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LIVING HEALTHY is published for the members and community partners of CENTRAL COAST ALLIANCE FOR HEALTH, 1600 Green Hills Road, Scotts Valley, CA 95066, telephone 831-430-5500 or 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5505, Web site 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.

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