

living

A newsletter for the members of
Central Coast Alliance for Health



Service with a smile!



Transportation changes in Santa Cruz County

As of Nov. 1, there is a change in who provides para-transit services in Santa Cruz County.

Non-medical ADA rides. As of Nov. 1, all non-medical ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) rides will be handled by the Santa Cruz County Metropolitan Transit District (the Metro).

Examples of non-medical rides are rides to the market, the senior center or the movies.

To request a non-medical ADA ride, call the Transit District at **(831) 425-4664**. The cost is \$3 each way.

Non-emergency medical rides. Lift Line will still provide non-emergency medical transportation rides for Santa Cruz County Alliance Medi-Cal members.

To qualify, your doctor must fill out a form stating that you are not able to use regular public transportation.

The ride must be for an Alliance-covered service. You or the provider must call for authorization at least three to four days in advance.

To schedule a non-emergency medical ride with Lift Line, you should call **(831) 688-9663**, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Have you ever wondered who answers the phone when you call Member Services?

Our Member Services Representatives (MSRs) are caring, dedicated professionals. They are here to help you Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. They can:

- Explain how the health plan works.
- Explain your benefits.
- Tell you which doctors and clinics you can go to.
- Update your address and phone number when you move.
- Answer questions about your Alliance benefits.
- Help you with concerns or complaints.
- Help you find other programs

if you need services that are not covered by the Alliance.

Meet Angie

Angie has been an MSR for three years. She finds it challenging and rewarding.

"I help our members understand their benefits and how to get care. I find my job to be most rewarding when I have helped a member in a way that has made a difference in his or her life."

She enjoys "going the extra mile to make sure our members get the medical care they need and deserve."



You and your health are important to us. Call us at 1-800-700-3874, ext. 4396.

Central Coast Alliance for Health

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Ease discomfort of colds, the flu

Sneezing, aching, coughing, sniffing—you know when you've got a cold or the flu.

You can take action to make yourself feel better. Good care may even make your illness shorter.

Easing your symptoms

If you think you have the flu, call your doctor. Medicine may make flu end sooner or reduce the symptoms. These drugs work best when you start taking them as soon as you feel sick.

The flu also calls for getting

lots of rest. That means staying home until you feel better. Plenty of rest is a good idea for a severe cold too.

Whether you have a cold or the flu, drink plenty of fluids. Drink at least eight glasses of juice or water every day. Also make sure to eat well.

For your symptoms, try over-the-counter medicines you can get at a drugstore or grocery store. They can help with aches, fever, stuffiness and swollen sinuses. Read labels carefully to find out what each drug is for.



To learn more about staying healthy, call the Health Educator at 1-800-700-3874, ext. 4441.



Lifesaving screenings

Every year, colon and rectal cancers take many lives. But it doesn't have to happen.

Tests can catch these cancers early. And early on, they're easiest to treat.

If you're 50 or older, ask your doctor about tests for these cancers. If anyone in your family has had colon or rectal cancer, you may need to be tested sooner.

Options include:

- A test that looks for blood in your stool.
- Tests that look at the lining of your colon and rectum.
- A special x-ray that shows the outline of your colon and rectum.

Your doctor can help you decide which one is best for you.

How to take medicines safely

Medicines are meant to help you feel better. But if you don't take them the right way, they may not work. They could even do you harm.

Every time your doctor prescribes a new medicine, ask:

- What it's for.
- How much to take and when.
- If it has any side effects.



Avoiding illness

But remember, prevention is the best medicine. Get a flu shot every year. Avoid ill people when you can. And wash your hands often all year long.

● If you should take the medicine with food or drink.

You should also tell your doctor about all of the medicines you take. Ask if any of them could cause problems with the new medicine.

You should list medicines that don't need a prescription, such as aspirin or cold medicine. Also mention vitamins and herbal supplements.

Be sure to take all medicines exactly as your doctor says. If you have any questions or problems, call your doctor.



To find out more about diabetes,
call 1-800-700-3874, ext. 4441.

The role of insulin

Insulin helps change sugar (glucose) from food into energy. Without insulin, sugar builds up in the blood and can make a child sick.

The body usually makes its own insulin. But children with type 1 diabetes can't make it. They must get it in shots. Most children need two shots a day.

Some children use an insulin pump instead of shots. This small device fits on a child's waistband. It supplies insulin through the skin as needed.

Healthy eating

Children also must keep their sugar levels in balance by eating well.

Make sure your child doesn't skip meals. Glucose could get too low. And be careful about

your child eating too much and having sugary soda pop or snacks. These can make sugar levels go too high.

A dietitian can give you and your child advice on eating right.

Encourage exercise

Exercise is good because it helps the body manage glucose. It also helps your child control his or her weight. Talk to your

child's doctor about the best types of exercise.

Helping your child control diabetes may ease your worry. And it can help your child stay healthy.

Protect your kids from type 2 diabetes

Being overweight can cause many health problems—even for kids. One of these problems is type 2 diabetes. This is a disease that affects the way your body turns food into energy.

Helping your kids stay at a healthy weight may reduce their risk of diabetes. And that may help prevent many other health problems later in life.

Here are some tips:

- Limit the time your children watch TV. Encourage them to be active instead.
- Plan fun ways to exercise together. Go for a bike ride or a walk, for example.
- Keep healthy snacks at home. Some good choices include low-fat cheese, fruits and vegetables, and graham crackers.
- Eat meals together. Set a good example with the foods you eat.

If you're concerned about your child's weight, talk to his or her doctor.



Helping a child

with type 1 diabetes

Parents worry about their kids. It's part of their job.

And you may worry even more if your child has type 1 diabetes. The disease increases a child's risk for eye, heart and kidney problems.

But you can reduce these risks by helping your child control diabetes.

To control type 1 diabetes, children must use insulin. They also should eat well and exercise.

Are you headed toward an eating disorder?



It's healthy to watch what you eat. And it's normal to want to look your best. But there's a line that's dangerous to cross.

If you can't stop worrying about your weight—you skip meals, always count calories or exercise too much—your behavior may be getting out of hand.

You may be on your way to an eating disorder.

So ask yourself:

- Am I afraid to gain weight?
- Do I feel guilty after eating?
- Do I avoid eating in front of people?
- Do I weigh myself often?
- Do my feelings depend on my weight?

One "yes" means you might be at risk for anorexia or bulimia. And both disorders can be deadly.

Tell someone about your

habits. Talk to your parents. Tell a doctor or a counselor.

Even if your health isn't at risk, you're not fully enjoying life.

And if you are on a dangerous path, it's best to get help now. With support, you can change your behavior.

Otherwise, you may develop a full-blown eating disorder you can't control.

Source: National Eating Disorders Association

Please keep in touch

Has your address or phone number changed?

If so, please call the Alliance at **1-800-700-3874, ext. 4396**.

This will help us to serve you better!



Insurance fraud costs everyone

Insurance fraud costs millions of dollars each year.

Who commits insurance fraud? It could be a provider who sends bills for services or items you never received or did not need. It could be a person who lets someone else use his or her insurance card to get services or medicine.

The Alliance has started a program to seek out and deal with fraud.

The main goals of this

program are to:

- Find and deal with fraud to protect members who need health care services.
- Make sure that money spent by the plan goes to pay for health care services that are needed.
- Obey state and federal laws about fraud.



If you suspect that someone may be committing fraud, please call us at 1-800-700-3874. We appreciate your help.



Give yourself a break

Worried about paying the bills?
Concerned about your kids?
Relationship trouble?

Stop and take a deep breath. The way you react to these daily strains can hurt your health.

But there are things you can do to make coping easier.

Let go of the things you can't change. Focus your energy on changing the things you can.

Talk things out. Sharing the stress can help relieve your worry.

Go for a walk. Exercise can lower blood pressure and ease tense muscles.

Relax. Just a few minutes of quiet time can change your outlook. Find a peaceful spot; if you can't, close your eyes and imagine that you are in a relaxing place.

Take one step at a time. Do the most important things first. After you finish one task, move on to the next. Take pride in what you have done.

Plan ahead. If you know that an event will be stressful, get ready for it as best you can.

Just a few minutes of quiet time can change your outlook.

Avoid drugs and alcohol. Don't try to relieve your stress by turning to these substances.

If life still seems like too much to handle, tell your doctor how you feel. It's not a weakness to ask for help.

Source: American Medical Women's Association

Be a quitter!

You can stop smoking

If you put that cigarette out **RIGHT NOW**, both your blood pressure and heart rate will go down within 20 minutes. This means your heart won't have to work as hard.

Stay smoke-free for eight hours and the level of carbon monoxide (a gas found in car fumes and cigarette smoke) in your blood will drop.

If you can keep it up for just 24 hours, you'll have less chance of a heart attack.

Other benefits

Hang in there. The payback gets bigger. Your risk of heart disease can be cut in half if you go a year without smoking.

The risk of stroke goes down within five years of quitting.

And about 10 years after you quit, your chances of dying from lung cancer are much less than for those who continue to smoke.

Pregnant?

If you quit smoking during the first three months of your pregnancy, your baby is less likely to be born too early or too small.

Giving up cigarettes is hard. But look at the rewards, not to mention the extra money you'll have to spend on other things.

If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor.

The Alliance will pay for patches or gum to help you stop. You can also take a free class. Call the Health Educator at **1-800-700-3874, ext. 4882**, to learn more.





Control mold to breathe easier

Mold harms more than just what it grows on. It can also contribute to asthma, allergies and other health problems.

Mold can grow almost anywhere. All it needs is moisture. That's why you'll often find mold in a bathroom, a basement or under carpets.

You won't be able to get rid of all of the mold in your home. But you can take steps to limit where it grows.

The first step to limiting mold is to keep things dry.

In the kitchen

- Open a window or use a fan when cooking.
- Clean up spills.
- Dry surfaces after cleaning up.

In the bathroom

- Open windows or run fans after showering.

- Wipe down the shower after each use.
- Replace shower curtains at the first sign of mold.

Around the house

- Open doors between rooms to keep air moving.

- Move furniture away from wall corners.

You can clean mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water. Be sure to dry the area completely after cleaning.

However, the mold will return if the area becomes wet again. You or your landlord might need to fix a faucet or make other repairs to keep the area dry.

Mold can grow almost anywhere. All it needs is moisture.

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology; Environmental Protection Agency

How to use a peak-flow meter

A peak-flow meter helps people with asthma see how well their lungs are working.

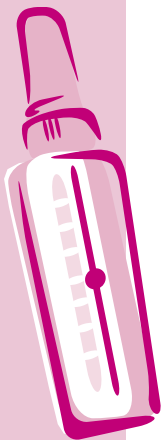
To use your peak-flow meter:

- Sit or stand straight.
- Set the meter to zero.
- Take a deep breath.
- Put the meter in your mouth.
- Be sure your lips are sealed around it.
- Blow out as hard and as fast as you can.
- Write down the number on the meter.

Repeat this process two more times. The highest number is called your peak flow.

Your peak-flow zones can be green, yellow or red. A number in the green zone means your asthma is under control. The yellow zone warns that your asthma is getting worse. Call your doctor if your number is in the red zone.

Your doctor can tell you how often to use your peak-flow meter. He or she can also tell you what to do when your numbers fall out of the green zone.



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