

living

A newsletter for the members of
Central Coast Alliance for Health



Kids on the move

questions & answers

Q. My 15-year-old daughter has never had chickenpox. Does she still need to be vaccinated?

A. Yes. People who are 13 years and older who have not had chickenpox should get two shots to guard against the disease. The shots are given four to eight weeks apart.

Chickenpox tends to be a mild illness. But some people have severe problems, such as brain swelling. That's why it's important to get the shots.



It's tempting to tell kids to stay still and be quiet.

But here's the truth: Kids need to move. Exercise helps build strong muscles and bones. It also helps kids stay at a healthy weight.

So encourage your child to get up and move around. Here are a few tips:

- Set a good example for your child. Let him or her see you doing active things.
- Make fitness a family priority. Take hikes, bike rides or walks together, for example.
- Choose toys and gifts that encourage activity. How about a new jump rope or a pair of sneakers?
- Add something enjoyable to chores. Here's an idea: Play music and march along while making the bed or sweeping the floor.

Remember to make exercise fun!

Sources: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Central Coast Alliance for Health

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

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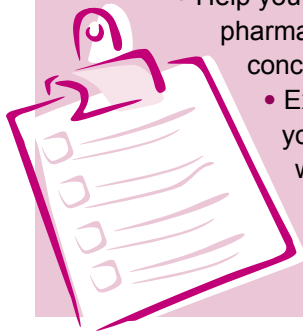
1600 Green Hills Road
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

Get answers from Member Services

Where should I get my medicine? Can my health plan help me quit smoking? What do I do if I've lost my ID card?

These are just a few of the questions Member Services can answer for you. When you need help, just call. You can also stop by our offices. We can:

- Tell you about your health benefits and services.
- Help you find a different doctor.
- Work with you to solve problems about getting care or service.
- Tell you about health education classes.
- Help you with pharmacy concerns.
- Explain how you can talk with your doctor in your language.



Help stop fraud

When people aren't honest, it can be fraud. Fraud can increase health care costs for all of us.

You can help us stop fraud and keep costs down.

Here are some things that may be health care fraud.

- Letting someone use a member ID card that doesn't belong to him or her.
- Giving wrong information on forms.
- Trying to get benefits that a person shouldn't receive.
- Trying to get medicines that a doctor didn't order.
- Forcing people to pay more for medical care than they should.
- Charging too much money for medicine at a drugstore.
- Giving people treatments that they don't really need.

These can be serious problems. If you think someone may be misusing benefits or not telling the truth in order to gain something, call us.

If you tell us when you think someone is doing something wrong, we'll try to find out if it's true. And if it is, we'll fix the problem. But we won't tell anyone that you talked to us.



Your name will be kept private.

Be sure to call if something doesn't seem right. With your help, we can protect people from fraud.

We're committed to your satisfaction

We work hard to keep you satisfied. But sometimes you might not be. When that's the case, we want to hear about it.

If you have a problem with your doctor, it's best to talk first to the doctor or his or her staff. But if that doesn't work,

we may be able to help.

You can tell us about the problem by calling Member Services. You can also write a letter, or fill out a form on our Web site at www.ccah-alliance.org.

Let us know if:

- You're not pleased with the care your doctor is giving you.
- You're unhappy with the services you get from your plan.
- You don't think the plan should

have denied you certain services.

Someone will look into your complaint, and we'll do all we can to help you. If you're still unhappy after we try to resolve your case, we'll tell you what steps to take next.

Your satisfaction is important to us. Don't hesitate to tell us if there's something you think we could do better.

Local teen wins bike for going to the doctor



Gustavo Muñoz won a new mountain bike.

It was Gustavo Muñoz's lucky day. Muñoz, age 14, won a free mountain bike from the Alliance for seeing his doctor for a well-care exam. Muñoz was the first to win a mountain bike as part of the Alliance's Teen Tune-Up program.

Thanks to a grant from Plantronics, Inc., mountain bikes were bought from the Bicycle Trip in Santa Cruz. The Bicycle Trip also gave free helmets and locks with the bikes.

There are **four** bikes left to raffle. If you are an Alliance member age 12 to 18, **you** can win one of the bikes that are left.

Here's how you can enter the raffle:

- 1.** See the doctor for your Teen Tune-Up exam.
- 2.** Have the doctor fill out and sign the Teen Tune-Up form sent to you by the Alliance.
- 3.** Send the form back to the Alliance.

You will be entered in the bike raffle **and** receive your gift card for a CD.

It is important that you as a teenager see your doctor every year, even if you are not sick. Your body is changing fast. You may have questions that only the doctor can answer.

So, teens, get your Teen Tune-Up and enter to win a free bike. If you have questions, call **1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580**.

Call your doctor today for a Teen Tune-Up exam.

For Medicare and Medi-Cal members

Change in drug coverage to come

If you have both Medicare **and** Medi-Cal, your prescription medicines are covered by Medi-Cal through the Alliance. Starting on January 1, 2006, this will change. Your prescription drugs will be covered by Medicare.

You will have to sign up for a Medicare drug plan. If you don't, Medicare will enroll you in a drug plan automatically. Here are some important dates:

October 15, 2005: You should have received information in the mail about the Medicare drug plans you can choose from.

November 15, 2005: As of this date, you can sign up for a Medicare drug plan. You will get a notice from Medicare telling you what plan they will put you in if you don't choose one on your own.

January 1, 2006: Your prescription medicines will be covered by your Medicare drug plan. You will have to get your medicines through your Medicare drug plan, not the Alliance.

This is a change that comes from Medicare. The Alliance did not choose to make this change.

It applies to everyone who has Medicare and Medi-Cal. If you do not want to have your medicines covered by Medicare, you will have to pay for them yourself.

Medi-Cal will not cover your medicines after January 1, 2006.

The Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) will have free meetings to explain this change. If you want to find out when there will be a meeting near you, call:

- Monterey County: **758-2811** (Salinas), **646-1458** (Monterey), **385-0557** (south county)
- Santa Cruz County: **462-5510**



Breathing problems

Just a cold?

Coughing, wheezing, trouble breathing—these are all signs of a respiratory illness. When your child has these symptoms, that can be scary.

Lots of things can affect the lungs. Some, like colds, aren't often serious. But others, such as the flu, can be.

If you think your child has a cold, help him or her feel better with:

- Fluids.
- A cool-mist vaporizer.
- Medicine to lower fever. Never give children aspirin.
- Medicine to help a stuffy nose.

Most colds last about a week. If there's fever, it usually lasts only the first few days of a cold.

Your child may have a more

serious problem if he or she has:

- Trouble breathing.
- Fever that lasts more than two days or rises. (Or fever or coughing in any baby younger than 3 months.)
- Symptoms that get worse.
- Fingernails, skin or lips that look blue or gray.
- A hard time eating.
- Dry mouth, little urine or crying without tears.

Call the doctor if your child has any of these symptoms.



For more tips to keep your child healthy, visit www.familydoctor.org or call the Alliance at 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580.

Help protect your child from a serious illness

The term *whooping cough* might sound a little funny. But it's nothing to laugh at.

It's actually a serious illness. Infants who get it can cough so much that they have trouble eating, drinking and breathing. Some even die from the disease.

Luckily, there's a shot to help protect kids. It's given in five doses—the first when a child is 2 months old, the last between ages 4 years and 6 years.

Most of the time, these shots will protect kids throughout childhood. But if older kids do get the disease, it's not usually as serious as it is for young kids.

Whooping cough starts like a cold. But then the cough gets worse. A child may get short of breath and look blue around the mouth. He or she may also drool or vomit.

If you suspect whooping cough, call your child's doctor. Medicine and hospital care may be needed.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

When an earache might be trouble

Ear infections are part of life for kids. But that doesn't mean you should ignore a child's earache.

When a child has ear pain—especially with fever, trouble hearing or fluid coming from the

ear—call a doctor. Being fussy or tugging at an ear might be signs that a young child's ear hurts.

Sometimes doctors wait for ear infections to get better on their own. Other times, they'll give your child antibiotics.

The doctor might also suggest:

- Medicine, such as Children's Motrin or Children's Tylenol.

- A warm heating pad.
- Ear drops.

To prevent ear problems:

- Breastfeed new babies for at least six months.
- Keep your child away from tobacco smoke.
- Ask a doctor about a shot that may help.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics



The A-1-c of diabetes

When you have diabetes, you need to test your blood sugar at home.

But you also need to have an A-1-c test at your doctor's office at least twice a year.

The A-1-c is a test that measures your average blood sugar over the past three months.

It's the best way to see how your treatment plan is working.

The A-1-c test is quick and easy. The lab checks a sample of blood from your finger or arm.

The more sugar you have in your blood, the higher your A-1-c reading will be.

For most people with diabetes, a good A-1-c is less than 7.

If your number is higher than 8, ask your doctor what you can do to lower it.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health



Look for signs of depression

If you have diabetes, it's important to watch for signs of depression.

That's because having diabetes doubles your chances of also having depression.

If you're depressed, you might have a hard time taking care of yourself and controlling your diabetes. You may not check

your blood sugar regularly or eat healthy foods. This can make your diabetes worse.

But depression can be treated. First, you have to know the signs. You might be depressed if you:

- No longer enjoy the things you used to enjoy.
- Feel sad or guilty for no reason.
- Sleep more than usual or have a hard time falling asleep.
- Can't concentrate.
- Have lost your appetite or you eat a lot more.
- Don't have any energy.
- Think about death or suicide.

If you have three or more of these signs for more than two weeks, see a doctor. Depression can be treated through counseling or medicine, or both.

Source: American Diabetes Association



To learn more about depression, call the National Institute of Mental Health at 1-866-615-6464.

Diabetes and your eyes



It's wise to take care of your eyes when you have diabetes.

Having diabetes makes you more likely to have eye problems. High blood sugar levels can lead to vision loss and blindness.

The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to have eye problems.

But there are steps you can take to protect your eyes.

First, you should see an eye doctor at least once a year. Finding early signs of eye disease and getting treatment can help you avoid more serious problems later on.

To take good care of your eyes:

- Keep your blood sugar under control.
- Bring down high blood pressure.
- Don't smoke.
- See your doctor right away if you have blurred vision or eye pain.

If you do have eye problems, there are good treatments available. Talk to your doctor about the best treatment plan for you.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health

Protect yourself from falls



"It happened so fast."
That's what people often say after an accident. And if you're older, one of the most serious kinds of accidents is a fall.

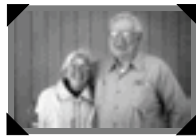
Standing on a chair to reach for something can lead to a fall. So can walking on a wet floor.

And falls can lead to broken bones. But a little planning can help keep you safe.

A good place to start is your home.

- Make sure your home is well-lit, especially stairways.
- Remove throw rugs.
- Keep a telephone within easy reach of your bed.

What YOU Can Do To Prevent Falls



Department of Health & Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control



Get a free brochure and home checklist for seniors. Call 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580, to request a copy.

- Keep electrical cords out of the way.
 - Put grab bars in tubs and showers.
- You can also try these additional tips:
- Ask your doctor if any drugs you are taking might affect your balance.

- Have your vision and hearing tested often.
- Don't get up too quickly after lying down.
- Get in shape. Exercise improves your strength, balance and coordination. This reduces your chance of falling.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institute on Aging

Transportation reminder

There is a new form for Alliance Medi-Cal members who get rides to their doctor's appointments. If you are one of these members, you should have already received a form in the mail. Your doctor will need to fill it out and return it to us.

We need to know what medical

conditions you have that keep you from using regular transportation. We will also ask you some questions about how you get places now.

This transportation is only to the health care provider that is closest to your home. If you qualify, we will only cover rides to and from the doctor's office. We will not pay for rides to go to the market or a senior or community center. We will not pay for rides to the

dentist or a swimming pool.

To qualify, you must:

- Have medical conditions that keep you from using regular transportation, and
- Not have access to any other transportation.

If you have questions, call the Alliance at **1-800-700-3874, ext. 5625** (Monterey County members) or **ext. 5615** (Santa Cruz County members).