

living healthy

June 2015
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A newsletter for the members of Central California Alliance for Health



We're committed to serving you better

We want to help you get the health care you need. Here are two ways we are doing that.

Coming soon: Nurse Advice

Line. The Alliance is committed to helping members get good health care advice 24 hours a day. Our new Nurse Advice Line service will let members talk to a nurse 24 hours a day. It will be available every day of the year. Members will be able to get advice on when and how to care for an illness or injury at home and when to see a provider.

Watch for more information on this new service coming soon!

New hours for Member Services

Call Center: open until 6 p.m.

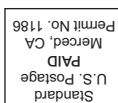
Starting June 1, 2015, you can call Member Services between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Our buildings will close at 5 p.m., but our Member Services Representatives will take your calls until 6 p.m.



Important dates

Member Services will not be available the following dates and times due to companywide and departmental meetings.

June 25	Closed from noon to 4:15 p.m.
September 9	Closed for the day
September 17	Closed from 12:30 to 4:15 p.m.
October 15	Closed from 11:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.
December 10	Closed from 10:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.



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Get the school year off to a healthy start!

Starting the new school year can be a time of great excitement. To help your child get a healthy start, make a back-to-school health care checklist.

Aside from school supplies, this health care checklist should include a back-to-school checkup. During a checkup, the Primary Care Provider (PCP) will review your child's growth and overall health to make sure your child is healthy and ready to learn.

This is also a good time to talk to your child's PCP about which vaccines or shots your child needs. Some children may require certain shots before school starts. For example, proof of a whooping cough vaccine is now required to

start the seventh grade. Also, it is now recommended that pregnant women in their third trimester get the whooping cough vaccination. Vaccines can help protect you and those around you. Talk to your PCP about including vaccines as part of continuing a healthy lifestyle.

Make it a habit to schedule appointments early. Don't wait until the last minute. This way you can be sure to get an appointment that is convenient for you. Your PCP's schedule could be very busy right before school starts.

If you have questions about childhood immunizations, visit the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Parents' Guide to Childhood Immunizations** page: www.morehealth.org/cdc-pg.



Other health coverage

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You may have other health coverage (OHC) if:

- You have health insurance through your job, Covered California, your spouse or partner, or if you bought insurance on your own
- You became eligible because of a new life event, getting married for example

Your OHC may have ended if:

- You were moved from Covered California to Medi-Cal
- Your job ended or you were laid off
- You didn't work enough hours to qualify for insurance through your job
- You stopped paying your premiums
- You canceled your policy for any reason

Who do I contact to update my OHC information? If you have Medi-Cal, call your county Medi-Cal office. It is

important that you give them this information so they can update your case. You should also call Alliance Member Services. They will have to verify that your OHC has ended before they can update your information.

Why is it important that I update my OHC?

- To make sure there are no problems with being seen at your doctor's office or getting prescriptions at the pharmacy
- So you won't get a bill from your doctor's office

MEDI-CAL AND THE ALLIANCE

What's the difference?

We get calls asking if Medi-Cal and the Alliance are the same. The answer is they are not the same.

Medi-Cal is a state and federal program that people apply for. If they qualify, they are eligible to get health care services.

Central California Alliance for Health (the Alliance) is a health plan. It is the health plan that most people who have Medi-Cal in Santa Cruz, Monterey and Merced counties are enrolled in.

Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal provides health care coverage for children, adults and people with disabilities in California. To qualify, people have to make less than a certain amount of money. Both the state and federal government pay for it. Some people are eligible because they get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through the Social Security office.

You can apply for Medi-Cal through your local county Medi-Cal office. You can also apply through California's Health Benefits Exchange, which is called Covered California.

Your local county Medi-Cal office determines if you are eligible. If you are, you will get a Medi-Cal Benefits Identification Card (BIC) in the mail. For the first month or two, you will have "fee-for-service"

or "state" Medi-Cal. You can see any doctor that takes fee-for-service Medi-Cal. The doctor will bill the state.

Call your county Medi-Cal office to:

- See if your Medi-Cal was approved or is still active
- Ask when your Medi-Cal renewal date is (Medi-Cal is renewed once a year)
- Update your address and/or phone number
- Report you are moving to another county so your Medi-Cal can be transferred
- Report a change in income or family size
- Ask for a new BIC
- Let them know if you have other health insurance or if you used to have other health insurance but don't any more

Central California Alliance for Health (the Alliance).

You will be automatically enrolled in the Alliance one or two months after you first become eligible for Medi-Cal. Once it happens, you will get an Alliance ID card in the mail and a new member packet. You will pick a Primary Care Provider (PCP). If you don't, we will assign you to one.

The Alliance covers most Medi-Cal services but does not cover dental services. Dental services are covered by the Denti-Cal Program.

For information about dental services, call the Denti-Cal Program at 1-800-322-6384.

Call the Alliance to:

- Learn more about how your health plan works
 - Get help with understanding what services are covered and how to get care
 - Choose or change your Alliance PCP
 - Let us know if you are not happy with your provider, the care you are getting or something the Alliance has done
 - Update your address and/or phone number
 - Ask for a new Alliance ID card
- You can reach the Alliance at **1-800-700-3874.**

	County Medi-Cal offices	Social Security
Santa Cruz County	1-888-421-8080	1-800-780-1106
Monterey County	1-877-410-8823	1-877-696-9397
Merced County	209-385-3000	1-888-632-7069

Are you at risk for colorectal cancer?

Find answers about this common disease.

What is colorectal cancer? Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the United States. It affects both men and women of all racial and ethnic groups. Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. When cancer starts in the colon or rectum, it is called colorectal cancer. Sometimes it is also called colon cancer for short.

What can I do to prevent colorectal cancer? Prevention is the key! If you are age 50 or older, colorectal cancer screenings should start now. Having these regular screening tests may prevent colorectal cancer deaths. Early screenings can also help find colorectal cancer at an early stage, and treatment can often lead to a cure. About 9 out of every 10 people whose colorectal cancers are found early and treated properly are still alive five years later.



Who is at risk for colorectal cancer?

- Men and women of all racial and ethnic groups are at risk.
- It is most often found in people age 50 or older.
- Your risk increases with age.

Additional risk factors. The risk for colorectal cancer may be higher than average if:

- You or a close relative have had colorectal polyps (a small clump of cells that forms on the lining of the colon) or colorectal cancer
- You have inflammatory bowel disease
- You have a genetic syndrome,

such as familial adenomatous polyposis or hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer

People at higher risk for colorectal cancer may need earlier or more frequent tests. Talk to your Primary Care Provider (PCP) about when to begin screening and how often you should be tested.

What are the symptoms?

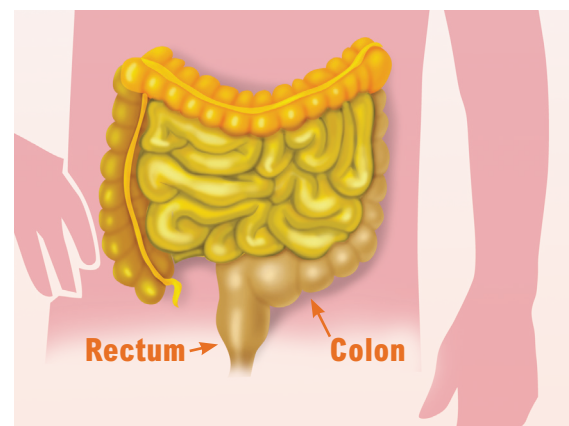
Some people with colorectal polyps or colorectal cancer have symptoms that may include:

- Blood in or on the stool (bowel movement)
- Stomach pain, aches or cramps that don't go away
- Losing weight without knowing why

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your PCP. These symptoms may be caused by something other than cancer. But the only way to know what is causing them is to see your PCP.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/sfl or call **1-800-232-4636**. For TYY, call **1-888-232-6348**.

Source: Colorectal Cancer Screening: Basic Fact Sheet. *National Colorectal Cancer Action Campaign* and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vital Signs: Colorectal cancer screening test use—United States, 2012. MMWR 2013;62(44):881–888.



How to prepare for your medical appointment

If you are planning to see your Primary Care Provider (PCP), the time you will have with him or her may be short. It is important to be prepared so you can make the most of the time with your PCP. Here are some tips that may help:

1. Bring your Alliance ID card and any other health insurance cards you may have (Medicare, Blue Cross, HealthNet, etc.).

2. Bring your health care records. If you have any health care records, bring them if the appointment is with a new PCP. If you don't have them, this is a good time to start a file. Remember, your health care records belong to you, and you have a right to them. You may request them from any doctor or hospital that has treated you in the past.

3. Make a list of the things you want to talk to your PCP about. The actual face-to-face time with the PCP is short, and some people forget to mention important information. It is a good idea to bring a list of the things you would like to discuss with your PCP. It is possible that there will not be time to discuss all of your concerns in one appointment. Make sure the most important issues are near the top of the list, while the less important ones are closer to the bottom.

Even if you feel nervous or embarrassed, don't wait until the end of the visit to mention the

main reason you came to see your PCP. Your PCP has probably heard it before, and by law he or she will keep your information private.

4. Be prepared to share with your PCP how your health is doing.

- Tell your PCP what your symptoms are and when they started.
- Share with your PCP things that you noticed that seem to make the symptoms better or worse.



■ Tell your PCP the medications—either prescription or over-the-counter—that you are already taking.

Some example questions to ask your PCP:

- How soon will I start to feel better?
 - What can I do to keep this from coming back?
 - Is it OK to go to work or school?
- 5. Think about bringing a friend or family member.** This is your call, but if you are nervous about the diagnosis or if you are going to be discussing treatment options, it may be helpful to have someone you trust in the room. They may remind you to ask questions, and this way you won't miss something important.
- 6. Don't leave until you understand what your PCP has said.** Ask your PCP to go over a list of things that you talked about during the appointment.
- If you need to get any lab work done, ask by whom and when.
 - For your medications, ask your PCP how much to take, how often and how long to take it for. Ask your PCP about any side effects, complications or special directions, such as if medications should be taken with food or without food.
 - Ask your PCP to share any other ways to make you feel better faster.
 - Ask your PCP what activities you can do, which ones you should stop and for how long.
 - Ask your PCP what might have caused the problem and what you might be able to do to prevent it from coming back.



Get to know your health care team

Do you know who is on your health care team? Learn why it's important.

Having a medical home. As an Alliance member, you have a Primary Care Provider (PCP) for all your regular medical care.

Your PCP will be your medical home. This is **the first place you call** when you need care or have a medical concern or question.

Having a medical home means:

- **All your information is in one place.** Your PCP will have your

health records. He or she will work with you for any health conditions you have, like diabetes, asthma or high blood pressure.

- **You are treated as a whole person.** Your PCP will check other areas of your health, not just the problem you came in for that day.

- **Your care is coordinated.** Your PCP can help you make a plan if you need to see other doctors or need tests or medicine. Your PCP will prescribe medicine and schedule follow-up visits. He or she will also refer you to specialists if needed.

Your health care team. Your PCP may be a doctor in private practice, a medical group or a clinic. But your PCP isn't usually just one person. There are others in the office or clinic who work with your doctor. They are all an important part of your health care team.

Your PCP and the office or clinic care team will work with you to make sure you get the care you need. This includes checkups and immunizations (shots) when you are well. It also includes visits when you are sick.

Your health care team may include some or all of the following:

- Nurse practitioner (NP)
- Physician assistant (PA)
- Registered nurse (RN) or licensed vocational nurse (LVN)
- Medical assistant (MA)

In some offices and clinics, your health care team may also include some or all of these individuals:

- Health educator
- Care coordinator
- Case manager
- Social worker
- Mental health counselor

You may see one or more of these people when you go to your PCP's office. They each play a key part in making sure you get the care and services you need. They work with your doctor, with each other and with you as part of your health care team.