

living healthy

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A newsletter for the members of Central California Alliance for Health



Care Transitions Program

The transition from a hospital or a skilled nursing facility (SNF) to home after discharge can be difficult. This is why the Alliance has taken extra steps to help members have a smooth transition. The Alliance Care Transitions Program makes

sure members get coordinated and ongoing care after being discharged or moved to their home. There are many reasons members may end up back at the hospital:

- Unable to follow up with a Primary Care Provider (PCP).
- Medication is not taken as prescribed.
- Communication gaps between settings.

The Alliance Care Transitions Program assists members in the following ways:

1. Calls members or their

caregivers within three days of the member's discharge.

2. Assesses if the member has a post-hospitalization follow-up appointment with their PCP within 14 days of discharge.
3. Reviews discharge paperwork with the member or their caregiver.
4. Assists with finding out if any new medications were ordered.

If there are questions, the member or their caregiver will be directed to the Alliance Nurse Advice Line or to their PCP. Our staff will also call the hospital staff, the PCP office or departments within the Alliance to coordinate care for the member. This ensures there is a smooth transition.

- » If you have questions about the Alliance Care Transition Program, please call **1-800-700-3874, ext. 5517.**

» IMPORTANT NOTICE:
Member Services will not be available on March 16 from 12:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. due to a company-wide meeting.

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Depression screenings

Depression is a serious and common mental health condition that affects more than 16 million Americans.¹ It affects people in different ways; for example, a person may:

- Want to sleep a lot or may find it hard to sleep.
- Have trouble focusing or

There are many ways to treat depression. The first step is to figure out if you are at risk for it.

remembering things.

- Feel sad, anxious or guilty.
- Think about harming themselves.

Because depression shows itself in different ways, many people who are depressed may not know it. Others might think that they are depressed but are too afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.

People with depression need treatment, just like they do for any other illness. The Alliance wants to make sure that members who need help can get it. There are many ways to treat depression. The first step is to figure out if you are at risk for it. Alliance health care providers screen for depression by asking questions about feeling down or hopeless or

losing interest in doing things. They might also ask about appetite and energy level. The answers to these questions help the provider know if someone is depressed and decide the kind of treatment that is best for them.

The Alliance is committed to making sure that you are as healthy as you can be, and mental well-being is an important part of that.

1: nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/major-depression-among-adults.shtml

The Alliance's American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services

Did you know the Alliance offers FREE American Sign Language (ASL) services for Alliance members who are deaf or hard of hearing? We work hard to ensure that all Alliance members can talk to their Primary Care Provider about their health care needs. To learn more about the Alliance ASL interpretation services, please call the Health Education Line at 1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580. You can also use the California Relay Service's FREE TTY line at 1-800-735-2929.



Tips to prevent falls

As we get older, physical changes, health conditions, and sometimes the medications used to treat those conditions make falls more likely to occur. But they are avoidable, and there are simple steps you can take to prevent falls.

Things you can do to prevent falls:

- **Exercise to improve balance and strength.** A good exercise to try is yoga.
- **Speak up.** Talk with your family and/or Primary Care Provider (PCP) if you have fallen or are feeling unsteady.
- **Review your medicine.** Have the doctor or pharmacist go over all the medicine that you are taking.

As you get older, the way medicine works in your body can change and may make falling more likely. Let the PCP know if you are having side effects.

- **Have your vision checked.** Poor vision can increase your chances of falling and can be corrected.
- **Wear sensible shoes.** Consider changing your footwear as part of your fall-prevention plan. High heels, floppy slippers and shoes with slick soles can make you slip, stumble and fall.
- **Remove home hazards.** Most falls happen at home, so remove small rugs; keep your floors clutter-free; and make sure your home has lots of light.
- **Use assistive devices.** Add grab bars in the bathroom, and have



handrails and lights installed on all staircases.

» For more information, visit cdc.gov/steady and stopfalls.org/what-is-fall-prevention/fp-basics.

March is National Kidney Month

National Kidney Month is observed during March, but you can take steps to prevent kidney disease any time of the year. Kidney disease means that the kidneys are damaged and cannot filter blood like they should. This damage can cause waste to build up in the body. It can also cause other problems that can harm your health. For most people, kidney damage occurs slowly over many years, often due to diabetes or high blood pressure. This is called chronic kidney disease.

Kidney disease is a growing problem. More than 20 million Americans may have kidney disease, and many more are at risk. Anyone can develop kidney disease, regardless of age or race, but African Americans, Hispanics and American Indians tend to have a greater risk for kidney failure. This is mostly due to higher rates of diabetes and high blood pressure in these communities. There may be other reasons too.

The main risk factors for developing kidney disease are:

- Diabetes.
- High blood pressure.
- Heart disease.
- A family history of kidney failure.

To learn more about these risk factors, talk to your doctor about how you can prevent kidney failure and what you can do to keep your kidneys healthy. Schedule an appointment today to get your kidneys tested for kidney disease.

» For more information, visit niddk.nih.gov/health-information/kidney-disease.

GETTING AN APPOINTMENT

How long should you have to wait?

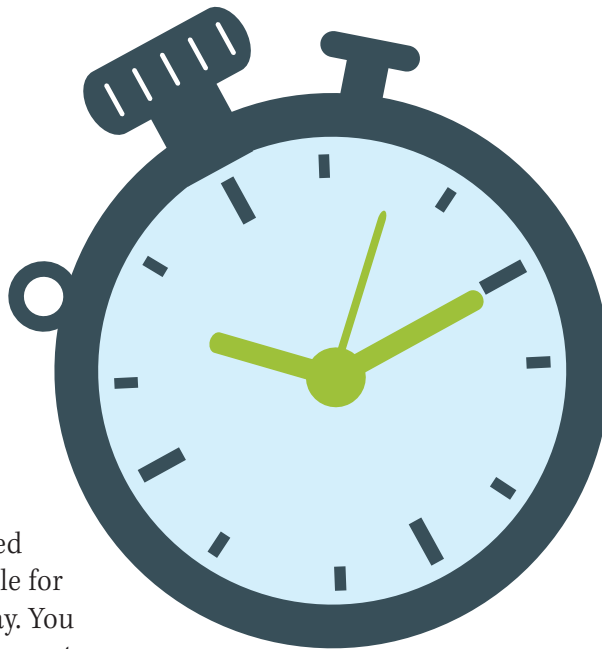
We know it is important for you to get care when you need it. But it is not always possible for a doctor to see you right away. You may have to wait longer for some types of appointments than others. For example, you should be able to get an urgent care (care when you are sick) appointment sooner than an appointment for a regular checkup.

We work with the doctors and clinics in our network to make sure you can get care when you need it. We have always done this because we know it is important.

Health plans in California have to meet certain standards for access to care. The regulations to put this law into place are called the Timely Access to Non-Emergency Health Care Services standards. There are different standards for different types of appointments.

In the chart below are the standards for different types of appointments. The waiting times for an appointment may be longer if the provider feels that it will not harm your health if you have a longer wait.

» If you feel you are not getting care when you need it, call Member Services at **1-800-700-3874**.



Confused by referrals and authorizations?

Do you know when you need a referral from your Primary Care Provider (PCP) before getting a service? What is the difference between a referral and an authorization? Are you able to go to a non-contracted provider? What about an out-of-area doctor?

The rules of your health plan can be confusing. But if you don't follow them, your services may not be covered. Here is information to help you follow the rules of your plan.

Referrals. If you are assigned to an Alliance PCP, you must have a referral to see another doctor. There are some exceptions to this. Please see the box at right for a list of some exceptions.

If your PCP thinks you need to see another doctor, he or she will fill out a Referral Consultation Form. Your PCP sends a copy to the doctor you are being referred to and a copy to the Alliance. The referral is how the other doctor and the Alliance know your PCP has approved the visit. If we don't have a referral, we will not pay the claim from the other doctor.

Authorized referrals. In most cases, your PCP will refer you to a doctor in our service area. Our service area includes Santa Cruz, Monterey and Merced counties. If your PCP refers you to a doctor out of our service area, he or she will need to get approval (also called authorization) from us in advance.

Type of care you need	Time to get an appointment
Urgent care	Within 48 hours of when you call
Non-urgent primary care	Within 10 business days of when you call
Non-urgent specialty care	Within 15 business days of when you call
Non-physician, non-urgent mental health care	Within 10 business days of when you call
Non-urgent diagnostic services	Within 15 business days of when you call

This is called an **authorized referral**. It is called this because we have to authorize, or approve, the referral before you can see the other doctor.

If you are an Alliance Healthy Kids, IHSS or Medi-Cal Access Program member, you will need an authorized referral if your PCP is referring you to a doctor that is not contracted with the Alliance—even one in our service area.

Prior authorization. The Alliance has to approve some services, procedures, medications and equipment before you get them. This is called **prior authorization**. The provider who is going to perform the service must fill out a **request for prior authorization**. The provider sends it to us online, by fax or by mail. We will review the request and any medical records the provider sends. If the service, procedure, medication or equipment is medically necessary and a covered benefit, we will approve the request. We will let the provider know, and then you can get the service. If we deny a request, we will let you and the provider know. You will be able to file a complaint if you disagree with our denial.

» **MORE INFORMATION.** For a complete list of services that do not require a referral, see your Evidence of Coverage or Member Handbook.



Some services that do not require a referral:

» Emergency services.

Alliance Medi-Cal Members may get the services below from any provider that accepts Alliance Medi-Cal. All other Alliance Members must go to a contracted provider in the Alliance's service area.

- » Family planning services: includes pregnancy testing and birth control.
- » Sensitive services: includes testing and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and termination of pregnancy.

Alliance Medi-Cal members may get the services below from any OB-GYN provider in the Alliance's service area accepting Alliance Medi-Cal. All other Alliance members must go to a contracted OB-GYN provider in the Alliance's service area.

- » Annual well-woman exam, Pap smear and breast exam.
- » Pregnancy services.

There are other services that do not require a referral. For more information, see your Member Handbook or Evidence of Coverage.



We can help you find a doctor

One of the best ways to stay well is to work closely with a doctor. If you don't have one already, we can help.

» To find a doctor in our network, call Member Services at **1-800-700-3874**. Or you can use our online Provider Directory on our website, cch-alliance.org.

This simple step can lead to a healthier you.

What is a PCP?

Think of your Primary Care Provider (PCP) as your gateway to the world of health care.

He or she will be your first stop when you're sick and when you need advice about staying well.

PCPs can be general practice or family medicine doctors, pediatricians, or internists. You can also choose a clinic or medical group to be your PCP. Among other things, your PCP will:

- Guide all of your health care.
- Be the one you go to for regular care and when you're sick.
- Help prevent health problems.
- Refer you to other doctors as needed.

Over time, your PCP will get to know your health history and help you make good choices so you can stay well.

Picking your doctor, group or clinic. You can find a PCP by looking in your Provider Directory in the PCP section. Or, for the most up-to-date information, go to our website, cch-alliance.org.

1. Click on the "Members" page.
2. Then click on the blue "Provider Directory" box to the left.
3. Go to "1. Search the online Provider Directory," and then select your language.
4. A new window will open up. Pick your health plan (Medi-Cal, IHSS or Medi-Cal Access Program) from the Health Plan drop-down box.
5. Pick "Primary Care Physician (PCP)" from the provider category drop-down box.
6. Make sure you look for a PCP who is taking new patients. To find a PCP who is taking new patients, check the "Accepting new patients" box.
7. Then pick your county and click "Begin Search."
8. Once you've picked a doctor, call Member Services to let us know who you want.

If you were an established patient of a PCP in our network before becoming an Alliance member and want to see if you can pick that doctor as your Alliance PCP, call Member Services. We will have to get approval from the provider. Being an established patient means that you were seeing that doctor on a regular basis within the past year.

Clip and save the steps to finding a PCP



Why is it important to have your Initial Health Assessment?

The Alliance and your Primary Care Provider (PCP) are here to help you stay healthy. You can start by making a visit to see your PCP for an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) exam within the first four months of when you become an Alliance member.

We all know that emergencies could happen to any one of us at any time. In the event of an emergency, it is important to have an established PCP who knows about your health background and problems. PCPs are your first line of defense in getting well and staying healthy.

The IHA exam is vital because it includes preventive screenings. Many health problems, if caught early, can be reversed through lifestyle changes. When you learn more about your health, you are more equipped to make better health choices.

You can also think of the IHA exam as a chance for you to see if your new

doctor is a good match for you. Just as your doctor is getting facts about you, you will be getting facts about them too.

This exam is fully covered by the Alliance and at no cost to you. To schedule a visit, please call your PCP. (Their phone number is located on the front of your Alliance card.)

» **STAY HEALTHY AND WIN!** Did you know that when you complete an IHA exam within the first four months of enrollment, you will be automatically entered into a one-time monthly raffle for a \$50 gift card?

Formulary changes

Drug name	Used for	Action
» Lipofen 50mg » Lipofen 150mg	Cholesterol	Removed
» Antara 43mg » Antara 130mg	Cholesterol	Removed
» Budesonide EC	Crohn's disease	Removed
» Pepcid	Stomach ulcers, GERD	Removed
» Zantac	Stomach ulcers, GERD	Removed
» Lialda, Asacol HD, Delzicol	Ulcerative colitis	Removed
» Incruse Ellipta	Asthma, COPD	Added
» CellCept	Immunosuppressant	Added
» Prograf	Immunosuppressant	Added
» Trilipix 45mg	Cholesterol	Added



If the medication you have been taking for some time is removed from this formulary changes table, you may be able to continue taking the same medication. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions.

Quitting tobacco is hard

Many former smokers say quitting was the hardest thing they ever did. However, millions of people have been able to do it, and you can too. Quitting involves practice, flexibility, commitment and effort. It's OK to make mistakes—people learn something new about quitting every time they try and are much stronger the next time they try. The first step of the quitting process is learning why you feel like you need to smoke. Knowing this can prepare you to find the best ways to quit and live a smoke-free life.

The best way to quit is using a combination of counseling and medication.

The best way to quit is using a combination of counseling and medication. Both in-person and over-the-phone counseling are effective. Quit-smoking programs help smokers manage and cope with problems they have when trying to quit. The programs teach problem-solving and other coping skills. Talk to your doctor to find the option that will work best for you.

The Alliance is committed to supporting members who wish to stop smoking and/or using

tobacco products. To achieve this, the Alliance provides tobacco cessation benefits and services through the Tobacco Cessation and Support (TCS) Program. Services include:

- Referrals to the convenient, toll-free California Smokers' Helpline at **1-800-NO-BUTTS (1-800-662-8887)**, which provides free cessation counseling over the phone for anyone in California.
- The cost for you to attend an

approved smoking cessation class in your area.

- Stop-smoking aids, such as Zyban or nicotine gum or patches.
- Easy-to-read brochures with tips to help you quit smoking and/or using tobacco products.

» For more information about the TCS Program, call the Health Education Line at **1-800-700-3874, ext. 5580**. For the Hearing or Speech Assistance Line, call **1-800-735-2929** (TTY: Dial **7-1-1**).

