How To Be a **Good Patient**

Have you ever missed your doctor’s appointment? It may not seem like a big deal, but you could be putting your health at risk. It could take time to get another appointment. Call your doctor’s office and let the staff know if you can not make your appointment. It is the right thing to do.

How long it can take to get an appointment depends on why you need to see your doctor. California sets the standard for waiting times. To help you understand waiting times, see the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Visit</th>
<th>Waiting Time</th>
<th>Reason for Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency</td>
<td>None. Available 24 hours, 7 days a week. Go to the nearest emergency room.</td>
<td>Symptoms you feel may be life threatening (ex., chest pain, shortness of breath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgent</td>
<td>Less than 48 hours</td>
<td>You are sick or injured but don’t have life-threatening symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine exam or checkup with your doctor</td>
<td>Less than 30 calendar days</td>
<td>No symptoms (annual exam, preventive checkup)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now that you know why you should not miss your appointment, be ready. Have you ever left your doctor’s office with more questions than answers? You can get the most out of your appointment by doing the following:

- Be sure the time and date works for you. Ask for different times and dates if needed.
- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early.
- Bring your L.A. Care ID cards.
- Bring your medications with you (including vitamins and herbal drugs).
- Write down questions or concerns you have and bring them with you.
- If your doctor does not speak your language, request an interpreter by calling L.A. Care at 1-888-839-9909 or TTY 1-866-522-2731.
- Be patient. Office waiting room time can be up to 45 minutes.
- Go over your list of questions with your doctor.
- Take notes.
- Tell your doctor if you are being treated by other doctors.

Remember, you and your doctor are a team. Working closely with your doctor—getting to your appointments, asking questions, listening to and following his or her advice—is good for your health.
Why are children getting Type 2 diabetes?
In the past, diabetes was mostly seen in older adults. Over the past 10 years, it has become more common in overweight and obese kids. More children are getting diabetes because they eat unhealthy foods and don’t get enough exercise.

What are the risk factors?
The risk factors for Type 2 diabetes are:
- Poor diet
- Lack of exercise
- Being overweight
- Having a family member with diabetes.

Help your child control his diabetes!
Take the following steps to keep your child’s blood sugar as close to normal as possible:

Education is the key!
- Learn all you can about diabetes. Talk to your child’s doctor.
- Go to a class on diabetes.
- Call L.A. Care Member Services for health education materials at 1-888-839-9909.

Support your child.
- Help your child understand what diabetes is and how important it is to control it.
- Let your child talk about his feelings about diabetes.

Help your child stay at a healthy weight by being a good influence.
- As a family, drink water at meal times. Limit sugary drinks such as soda, juice, and sport drinks.
- Eat smaller portions.
- Teach your child how to make healthy snacks and meals using fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat foods.
- Remind your child to eat at the same time each day and to eat healthy snacks.

Be active!
- Limit TV and computer time to less than two hours a day.
- Walk as a family, play at the park, and have your child play sports.

Take your child to regular health checkups.
- Talk to your child’s doctor.
- Ask questions.
- Make sure your child takes his medicine and checks his blood sugar.

Ask the Doc: What Can I Do if My Child Has Type 2 Diabetes?

What is Type 2 diabetes?
Diabetes is a life-long disease where there is too much blood sugar (glucose) in the body. There is no cure for it, but it can be controlled. If it is not controlled, diabetes can damage the heart, eyes, kidneys and nerves. Blood sugar comes from the foods we eat. It is also stored in our liver.

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- Talk to your child’s doctor.
- Ask questions.
- Make sure your child takes his medicine and checks his blood sugar.

Ask your doctor or call 1-888-839-9909 for a free copy of this booklet.
Diabetes and Your Eyes

If you have diabetes, keep an eye on your sight. Diabetic eye disease can cause blindness! Diabetes damages tiny blood vessels in your eye. This is called diabetic retinopathy.

What are the warning signs?
You may have changes in your sight like **blurred side vision OR blurred central vision.**

But often you may have no symptoms.

What can I do?
Get an eye exam at least once a year. It’s PAINLESS and it’s FREE.

MAY is Healthy Vision Month. Call your doctor and get your eye exam if you have not done so in the past year.

What To Do if Your Doctor’s Office is Closed

1. Call your doctor’s office. Ask for your doctor or the doctor on call to call you back.
2. Call your health plan’s 24-hour Nurse Advice Line. The number is on the back of your member ID card.
3. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you think you have a life-threatening condition.

You can reach your doctor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When you are not sure what you should do, **CALL YOUR DOCTOR.** Your primary care doctor knows you better than the ER doctor. You may not have to wait in the emergency room.

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**Blurred SIDE vision**
**Blurred CENTRAL vision**

Your doctor can give you this brochure with more information.
What To Do With Your Doctor’s Bill

Did you know your health plan pays the doctor for all covered health care services that you receive? Many of the payment amounts are set by the state. However, if your doctor does not agree with the payment received from the health plan, he or she may send you a bill for the difference. This is known as **balance billing**, and it is against the law.

What you should do if you get a bill from your doctor:

1. **Call right away.** Let L.A. Care know about the bill immediately by calling 1-888-839-9909. Have the bill in front of you so you can answer any questions.

2. **Don’t pay.** The health plan will call the doctor about the bill and let you know what to do next.

3. **File a complaint.** If you’ve called L.A. Care and keep getting bills from your doctor for covered services or for services you did not receive, file a complaint. You can complain to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Medicare</th>
<th>Medi-Cal</th>
<th>Healthy Families</th>
<th>Healthy Kids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)</td>
<td>1-800-633-4227</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC)</td>
<td>1-888-466-2219</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)</td>
<td>1-916-445-4171</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board (MRMIB)</td>
<td>1-916-324-4695</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please remember that you must still pay your co-pay (if you have one) and for health care services you receive that are **not covered** by your health plan.
**Brand-name or Generic Drugs: Which are Better?**

Is a brand-name drug better than a generic drug? No. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a generic drug must have the same chemical makeup, the same prescribed amount, and be in the same form (such as a pill or liquid) as the brand-name drug. This means a generic drug is just as good as a brand-name drug.

Today, about 50% of all prescriptions are for generic drugs. If you are not sure whether the generic drug is right for you, talk to your doctor.

You should ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions about any medicine:

- What is the name of this drug?
- What does this drug do?
- What does it look like (color, pill or liquid, etc.)?
- How and when do I take this drug?
- How long do I need to take it?
- Does it have side effects?
- What should I do if I have side effects?
- Will it affect any other medicines I take?

For an updated list of drugs covered by your health plan, visit L.A. Care’s Web site. If you are an L.A. Care Medi-Cal member with one of our Plan Partners, visit your health plan’s Web site.

**What is Fraud, Waste and Abuse?**

All L.A. Care members should report fraud, waste and abuse if they suspect it. Here are a few examples:

- **Fraud**: Using another person’s member ID card to receive free services.
- **Waste**: Visiting many doctors for the same condition. This leads to more costs.
- **Abuse**: Getting medications or services you don’t need.

If you think any of the above has taken place, please call the L.A. Care Fraud and Abuse Hotline at 1-800-400-4889 or contact L.A. Care’s Compliance Officer at 213-694-1250 ext. 4292.
Breastfeeding—It’s Good for Moms and Babies

For babies, breastfeeding:
- Provides all the nutrients they need for the first six months of life
- Helps them stay healthy and prevents colds and ear infections

For moms, breastfeeding:
- Burns calories to help lose weight faster
- May lower the risk of breast cancer

If you can’t breastfeed all the time, you may be able to get a breast pump. Talk to your doctor about any concerns you have or call WIC (Women, Infants and Children) at 1-888-942-9675. WIC now gives breastfeeding women more healthy food choices like fruits and vegetables, canned fish, whole grains, and soy products.

New Breast Cancer Screening Guidelines

Women age 40 and older may no longer need a mammogram every year. A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast that helps detect cancer. If you are between the ages of 40 and 50, talk to your doctor about whether you need a mammogram. Women age 50 and older should get a mammogram every two years. A mammogram ordered by your doctor will be covered by your health plan.

Tips to Control Asthma at Home

Wash sheets and blankets in hot water at least once a week.

Wipe off dust in your home with a damp cloth regularly.

Never allow anyone to smoke in your home or car!

Talk to your PCP doctor for more tips.
Learn About Your Coverage

When you first join L.A. Care, and then every year after, you will get a package of important information about your health care coverage. Please read it and call us if you have any questions. You can visit our improved Web site at www.lacare.org for the information listed below and more:

Basic Information
- What benefits and services are covered
- What benefits and services are not covered
- How your health plan makes decisions about new treatments
- What care you can and can not get when you are out of Los Angeles County
- How to access care when you are out of Los Angeles County
- How to change or get care from your primary care physician (PCP)
- How to get information about doctors
- How to get a referral
- What to do when you need care right away or when the office is closed
- What to do if you have an emergency
- How to get prescriptions filled and other pharmacy information
- Co-payments and other charges
- What to do if you get a bill

Special Programs
- How L.A. Care makes sure you get good health care
- Programs for people with disease, like diabetes or asthma

How decisions are made about your care
- How our doctors and staff make decisions about your care
- How to reach us if you want to know more about how decisions are made about your care
- How to appeal a decision about your care

Member Issues
- Your rights and responsibilities as a health plan member
- How to complain when you are unhappy
- What to do if you are disenrolled from your plan
- How L.A. Care protects and uses your personal health information

If you would like paper copies, please call us at 1-888-839-9909.

Not sure which health plan you are in? Not sure which program you belong to?
Check your ID card!

Or call L.A. Care at 1-888-839-9909 and we’ll tell you.

No matter which program or health plan you belong to, you are still part of the L.A. Care family! You can always call us for help.
Member News is a publication for members of L.A. Care Health Plan. Published two times a year by L.A. Care, Member News goes to members in Medi-Cal, L.A. Care Health Plan Medicare Advantage HMO, Healthy Kids and Healthy Families Programs.

If you want the information contained in this newsletter in another language or in large print, Braille, or audio (cassette or CD) call L.A. Care at 1-888-839-9909 or TTY 1-866-LA-CARE1 (1-866-522-2731).