New Year, New You!

As the year begins we often make plans to get healthier. It is a time to reset our routine, have a fresh start and let go of unhealthy habits. Following are some tips to help you see areas for improvement for long-lasting success and better health:

• Stop unhealthy habits – If you smoke, take steps to quit. If you need help quitting smoking, L.A. Care can help. Call Health Education at 1.855.856.6943 (TTY 711), Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. to learn about in-person workshops and online self-paced programs and resources. Talk to your doctor about medications covered by your health plan that can help you quit smoking. Limit alcohol use.

• Set easy goals – Break goals down into small parts that you can do easily. Aim to lose 1-2 lbs. a week, instead of 20 lbs. a month. Walk or run for 20 minutes a day to build up to reaching a goal of walking or running a marathon.

• Eat healthy – Clean out your cabinets and refrigerator. Get rid of fattening, sugary foods and snacks like chips and sodas. Buy healthier foods such as fruits and vegetables, lean protein meats and dairy. Choose turkey, air-popped popcorn, crunchy celery and carrots or low-fat yogurt as snacks. Drink more water and less sugary drinks.

• Get moving! – You don’t have to join a gym, you can take a walk during lunch or after dinner to get exercise. Do something fun and physical daily. You’ll likely stick to it if you enjoy it. L.A. Care Health Plan and Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan’s Community Resource Centers offer virtual Zumba and other exercise classes. For more information, please visit lacare.org or call 1.877.287.6290 (TTY 711), Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

• Go to bed at a reasonable time – Sleep is important for our body to feel good, to restore itself and for concentration. Sleep increases our energy. Set a regular bed time that allows you to get 7-8 hours of deep sleep. Don’t use electronics before bed – cell phones, television, laptops, etc. They stimulate brain activity and make it harder to get to sleep.

Be sure to make an appointment to get an annual checkup from your doctor. Staying healthy is one of the best New Year’s resolutions we can make. Get healthy today!
**Q: When are sore throats most common and do I need to see a doctor?**

**A:** Winter is here which means that sore throats are back. It can be the first sign of a cold, flu or strep throat. Depending on the cause of your sore throat, you may, or may not, need to see your doctor. Colds and flu are caused by viruses and can often be treated at home.

**Q: How long will a sore throat last with a cold and what are the symptoms?**

**A:** If your sore throat is caused by a cold, it will go away in a few days and does not need antibiotics to be treated. However, if you have strep throat, which is caused by bacteria, an antibiotic may be needed.

**Q: How do you know the difference between a sore throat and strep throat?**

**A:** A sore throat that is caused by strep is very painful and does not go away on its own. It can come on suddenly and is accompanied by high fever and white patches in the throat. You will want to see your doctor, who can provide you with a strep test before any antibiotics are given.

**Q: How can I protect myself from flu?**

**A:** The flu is also common during winter. A great way to protect yourself and your loved ones from catching the flu is to get a yearly flu shot, which temporarily immunizes and protects you from the flu. L.A. Care Health Plan offers the flu shot as a free service. It’s easy to get one by simply going to see your doctor or visiting a local pharmacy and showing your L.A. Care Member ID card. Questions? Call 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711). For more information, please visit the L.A. Care website at lacare.org.

**Q: Should I go to an Emergency Room for treatment?**

**A:** If you do need to see your doctor this winter, think about the best place to get care. Emergency rooms are for life threatening situations. Colds, flu and strep throat can be treated at your doctor’s office. If your doctor’s office is closed when you call, listen to the instructions for getting after-hours care. Save the emergency room for true emergencies.

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Wishing You a Healthy & Happy New Year!
Protect Yourself From the Flu

Last year’s flu rates were lower than in other years. This is likely due to COVID-19 practices like wearing a mask, social distancing, and hand washing.

Keep up healthy habits this flu season by:
- Getting a flu shot
- Washing your hands or using hand sanitizer often
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Following local masking and social distancing COVID-19 guidelines

If you have not gotten your FREE flu shot this flu season, get one today! Just go to your doctor or local pharmacy and show your L.A. Care member ID card.

Fruits and Vegetables: Who’s Eating Them?

From a young age we are told to eat our fruits and vegetables. Yet, a third of L.A. Care members say they aren’t eating the recommended 5-7 servings a day. Let’s review how great fruits and vegetables are for us.

Benefits:
- Low in calories, but high in nutrients
- May reduce risk of heart attack, stroke, and some cancers
- High in fiber, which can help control blood sugar
- People who eat enough fruit and vegetables are more likely to be at a healthy weight and live longer.

Easy ways to add fresh fruits and vegetables to your daily meals:
- Add fresh fruits to your cereal, oatmeal or yogurt
- Bring an apple or banana with you for a snack
- Add chopped vegetables like onions, tomato and celery when cooking soup, stew, beans, and spaghetti sauce
- When making rice, add frozen peas, spinach, or carrots a few minutes before rice is ready
- Top grilled meats and vegetables with fresh salsa

Always buy fruits and vegetables in season for best flavor and price. For more tips and recipes, log on to L.A. Care’s health and wellness portal members.lacare.org/ or visit myplate.gov.
One in eight Americans receive food through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and yet for at least a decade, experts have insisted that food stamp benefits were too low to provide a truly nutritious diet. The Biden Administration recently took action (link is external) to address that problem. The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced an update to its benefits formula that is based on current food prices, and it will mean an average increase in pre-pandemic benefits of 25% as of October 1, 2021. That jump could help to reduce the poverty and hunger that could dramatically improve the health outcomes of many L.A. Care Health Plan members.

More than 42 million Americans receive SNAP benefits, and 1.3 million of them are right here in Los Angeles County. Nutrition plays a critical role in the health of everyone. A nutritious diet can help prevent disease, control chronic conditions, and ensure proper childhood development.

But too often low-income people, who already live in food deserts with limited access to healthful and affordable food, aren’t able to provide nutritious meals for their families. The average SNAP benefit will increase by $36.24 per person, per month. L.A. Care applauds this action by the Biden Administration and is encouraged that it could be the beginning of more efforts to increase health equity at the federal level. L.A. Care is committed to advancing health equity for our members and their communities.

Go Green and Get Be Well electronically!

Would you like to get Be Well by email? Please sign up on our website at lacare.org/be-well to receive it by email. Be sure to like us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.
Stay Healthy – Get Screened

Did you hear the good news about colorectal, or colon, cancer tests? The age guideline has been lowered and testing is now recommended for adults starting at age 45!

Cancer screenings save lives. Most people with colon cancer feel fine. This means getting screened even if you don't have any symptoms.

- Get screened even if you don't have a family history.
- Screening can help find issues before they become cancer.
- Cancer is easier to treat when found early.

Don’t delay your care. There are many FREE options for colorectal cancer tests. Call your healthcare provider today to find out which one is right for you. Options include:

- A colonoscopy
- A stool test done in the privacy of your own home
- And other tests

Get screened not just for you, but also for your family. It could save your life!

Pharmacy News

Medi-Cal Rx Transition Reminder
The Medi-Cal Rx Transition started on January 1, 2022. As of this date, you will get your Medi-Cal covered prescriptions through Medi-Cal Rx instead of L.A. Care Health Plan. The Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is working with a new contractor, Magellan Medicaid Administration, Inc. (Magellan) to offer Medi-Cal Rx services. There will be no change in how you pay for your medications. For most Medi-Cal beneficiaries, there is no cost.

You should have also received multiple letters and information about this change.

For more information, visit Medi-CALRX.dhcs.ca.gov. If you have questions on or after the transition date, please call the Medi-Cal Rx Call Center Line (1.800.977.2273) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or 711 for TTY, Monday thru Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Prescription Drugs Listed on the L.A. Care Website
To find out more about L.A. Care list of covered drugs called the Formulary, and monthly updates, visit the L.A. Care website at lacare.org. You will also find information about limits or quotas, generic and brand medications, restrictions, on medication coverage, the medication request process, drug preferences and procedures on how to use the Formulary.
Community Resource Centers
Hosts Pop-Up Flu Shot Clinics

To get ready for flu season, L.A. Care Health Plan and Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan’s Community Resource Centers held 10 drive-thru and walk-up flu shot clinics across Los Angeles County. From Sept. 30 through Nov. 5, thousands of individuals – members and non-members – 3 years and older rolled up their sleeves for a free flu shot.

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to affect communities, receiving a flu vaccine is more important than ever, especially as many people return to school and work.

“While we prevented a COVID-19 and flu ‘twindemic’ last season, it could very well happen this season,” said Richard Seidman, M.D., MPH, L.A. Care Chief Medical Officer. “It would be unfortunate as there are effective, life-saving vaccines for the flu and COVID-19 – and they are more widely available than ever before.”

Health experts agree that receiving both the COVID-19 and flu vaccines at or around the same time is safe and effective. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that getting the flu vaccine is especially important for those at high risk of flu complications, including children, older adults, pregnant women, and those with chronic medical conditions. If you have concerns or questions about the flu vaccine, please talk with your doctor.

For more information about the Community Resource Centers, visit activehealthyinformed.org.

NCQA 2021 Multicultural Health Care Distinction

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) has awarded L.A. Care Health Plan the 2021 Multicultural Health Care Distinction (MHC). L.A. Care was first awarded this distinction in 2013 and has successfully earned it every two years since.

What does this mean?

- It means that NCQA recognizes L.A. Care Health Plan as an organization that does an exceptional job providing culturally and linguistically sensitive health care services.
- It also means L.A. Care is actively striving to reduce health care disparities.

The MHC Distinction recognition is an honor and privilege for L.A. Care. We look forward to continuing to serve L.A. County’s culturally and linguistically diverse membership.
Self-Care While Caregiving: Take Time For Yourself

If you are a caregiver of someone who needs a lot of help or is dependent on you, it is important that you take time to care for yourself.

Caregiving can take a toll on your mental and physical health. Self-care supports your overall well-being. Otherwise, you will not be as strong or able to keep giving care every day. Your body and mind must be healthy and stress-free in order for you to feel good and help others.

How do you do this? Remember to take care of yourself. It is like filling your own pitcher so that you will have something to share or pour out to others. Focus on doing things that you enjoy and relaxes you.

Plan a Support Network
Caregivers can benefit from planning a support network, too. Take steps to connect with family and your community to help you cope with caregiver stress.

- **Reach out to family, friends, churches or groups for help.** When someone offers to help, let them do so.
- **Hire a homescare worker from In-home Support Services (IHSS) to help with daily needs.** For Medi-Cal and Cal MediConnect Members, L.A. Care will work with the county IHSS office to arrange for help.
- **Use Community-Based Adult Services (CBAS) – CBAS centers have Temporary Alternative Services (TAS) like delivered meals, telephonic nurse check-ins on health issues, and a social worker for those who are eligible.**
- **Join a support group.** Connecting with others who understand what you are going through can help with feelings of fear and hopelessness.
- **L.A. Care offers training for IHSS Providers.** Caregivers can learn skills such as CPR/First Aid, Infection Control, and Nutrition and Diet through a program with California Long-Term Care Education Program (CLTCEC). To learn more call 1.213.985.1694 (TTY 711) (English and Spanish) or 1.844.725.8232 (TTY 711) (all other languages).

Consider meditating, listening to music, spending time in nature, exercising, cooking your favorite dish or just taking a long shower. Sometimes just taking five minutes a day for yourself can make a difference. You will feel more energized and able to keep going.

For assistance, please reach out to your primary care physician or health plan; L.A. Care at 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711) or Beacon Health Options at 1.877.344.2858 (TTY 1.800.735.2929) 24 hours, 7 days a week, for counseling and mental health assistance.
**Telehealth: Getting Essential Healthcare Services When You Need Them**

The L.A. Care and Blue Shield Promise Health Plan Community Resource Centers are offering a safe and private space equipped with a laptop, phone, headphone, and printer for your Telehealth appointments. Visit your local Community Resource Center to use the Telehealth space.

**What is Telehealth and how does it work?**

You can get virtual care for common illnesses, mental health services and consultations through Telehealth. It allows you to meet with a trained doctor via phone or a video call.

Book a Telehealth appointment and then reserve the Telehealth space at a Community Resource Center.

On the day of your visit, you will:

- Click on a link sent to your email, or
- Log in to your health care portal

**How to Access the Telehealth Space at the Community Resource Centers:**

- Call or visit your local Community Resource Center to reserve the space or
- Reserve the Telehealth space via the appointment scheduler at [visitcrc.lacare.org](http://visitcrc.lacare.org).

Call **1.877.287.6290 (TTY 711)** to learn more about how Telehealth services can help you.

**What are the benefits of using Telehealth Services at the Community Resource Centers?**

- Speak to a doctor without going to a clinic or doctor’s office.
- Use a reliable and safe internet connection.
- Access to other resources and services.

**Looking for L.A. Care Members to Join the Community Advisory Committees**

Do you want to learn how the health care system works? Would you like to share your thoughts on how L.A. Care can improve their services? L.A. Care is looking for people to join the **Community Advisory Committees (CACs)**. As a CAC member, you can help L.A. Care meet the needs of the neighborhoods we serve. Your voice can really make a difference in improving the health care for the over 2 million L.A. Care members in L.A. County!

For more information, please call the **Community Outreach & Engagement Department at 1.888.522.2732 (TTY 711)**, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
A Little **Information Can Go a Long Way**

We all have individual needs. L.A. Care will sometimes ask questions to help us understand our members’ particular needs, such as, “What is your race?” or “What is your preferred written or spoken language?” Sharing this information is always voluntary, but it helps L.A. Care better understand your needs, create new programs, and improve services for all members.

State law requires that L.A. Care collect information about race, ethnicity and language preference. We may also ask about your sexual orientation or whether you have a disability. Sharing this information with L.A. Care is optional, but it can help you receive the care you need, when you need it.

It can also help us know if you need access to services, such as receiving written materials in your preferred language or format. You can also get access to our no-cost interpreting services, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including American Sign Language. You may wonder, “Is my information safe?” The answer is yes. L.A. Care values and protects your privacy, and is only allowed to use or disclose this information for limited purposes to authorized users. Your privacy is as important to us as your health.

**Remember:** the information you provide is never used to deny coverage or benefits. L.A. Care does not use member demographic data to perform underwriting, set rates, or determine benefits. Your race, ethnicity and language preferences are only used to help us provide you with care tailored to your individual needs.

Questions about the use of personal information or want to provide us with updated information? Please call **Member Services** at 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711), 24 hours, 7 days a week and holidays.

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**L.A. Care Works for You**

At L.A. Care, we inform, educate, and engage our members. We want to empower YOU to be well and happy with your health care. We reach more than 2 million members through mail, email, phone, websites, newsletters, and even through your doctor!

Let us help you with your health care when and how you need it. Call us at 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and holidays. Also, visit our website and member portal at [lacare.org](http://lacare.org).

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**Nurse Advice Line Can Help You**

Do you have questions about your health? Need medical advice fast? The **Nurse Advice Line** is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Registered nurses will answer your health questions and help you take care of your family. Get tips on avoiding the flu, treating the common cold and so much more.

Use the audio library to listen to recorded messages on many different health topics. Call the L.A. Care **Nurse Advice Line** at 1.800.249.3619 (TTY 711) or chat with a nurse online for free. To access the nurse chat function, go to [lacare.org](http://lacare.org) and click on “Member Sign In” to log on.
As a member of L.A. Care, you have the right to...

Respectful and courteous treatment.
- You have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy by your health plan's providers and staff.
- You have the right to be free from consequences of any kind when making decisions about your care.

Privacy and confidentiality.
- You have the right to have a private relationship with your provider and to have your medical record kept confidential.
- You also have the right to receive a copy of and request corrections to your medical record.
- If you are a minor, you have the right to certain services that do not need your parents’ approval.

Choice and involvement in your care.
- You have the right to receive information about your health plan, its services, its doctors and other providers.
- You also have the right to get appointments within a reasonable amount of time.
- You have the right to talk candidly with your doctor about all treatment options for your condition, regardless of the cost or benefit coverage, and participate in making decisions about your care.
- You have the right to say “no” to treatment, and the right to a second opinion.
- You have the right to decide how you want to be cared for in case you get a life-threatening illness or injury.

Receive timely customer service.
- You have the right to wait no more than 10 minutes to speak to a customer service representative during L.A. Care’s normal business hours.

Voice your concerns.
- You have the right to complain about L.A. Care, the health plans and providers we work with, or the care you get without fear of losing your benefits.
- L.A. Care will help you with the process. If you don’t agree with a decision, you have the right to appeal, which is to ask for a review of the decision.
- You have the right to disenroll from your health plan whenever you want. As a Medi-Cal member, you have the right to request a State Fair Hearing.

Service outside of your health plan’s provider network.
- You have the right to receive emergency or urgent services, as well as family planning and sexually transmitted disease services, outside of your health plan’s network.
- You have the right to receive emergency treatment as follows:
  - **Medi-Cal and Cal MediConnect members:** Emergency care services are covered at all times anywhere in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. For Medicare-covered services, emergency is NOT covered outside of the United States and its territories. For Medicare-covered emergency care provided outside of the United States and its territories that are not covered by Medi-Cal, you may receive a bill from the provider.
  - **PASC-SEIU members:** Emergency care services are covered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, anywhere.

Service and information in your language.
You have the right to request an interpreter at no charge. You have the right to get all member information in your language or in another format (such as audio or large print).

Know your rights.
- You have the right to receive information about your rights and responsibilities.
- You have the right to make recommendations about these rights and responsibilities.
As a member of L.A. Care, you have the responsibility to...

**Act courteously and respectfully.**
- You are responsible for treating your doctor, all providers, and staff with courtesy and respect.
- You are responsible for being on time for your visits or calling your doctor’s office at least 24 hours before the visit to cancel or reschedule.

**Give up-to-date, accurate, and complete information.**
- You are responsible for giving correct information that your providers and L.A. Care need in order to provide care.
- You are responsible for getting regular checkups and telling your doctor about health problems before they become serious.

**Follow your doctor’s advice and take part in your care.**
- You are responsible for talking over your health care needs with your doctor, developing and agreeing on goals, doing your best to understand your health problems, and following the treatment plans you and your doctor agree on.

**Use the Emergency Room only in an emergency.**
- You are responsible for using the emergency room in cases of an emergency or as directed by your doctor.

**Report wrongdoing.**
- You are responsible for reporting health care fraud or wrongdoing to L.A. Care.
- You can do this without giving your name by calling the L.A. Care Compliance Helpline toll free at 1.800.400.4889 (TTY 711), Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., going to lacare.ethicspoint.com calling the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Medi-Cal Fraud and Abuse Hotline toll-free at 1.800.822.6222 (TTY 711).

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**Important Numbers**

Do you have questions about your benefits? Please see the contact information below to get help and answers.

**L.A. CARE HEALTH PLAN**
- **L.A. Care Medi-Cal Plan**
  - 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711)
- **L.A. Care PASC-SEIU Health Plan**
  - 1.844.854.7272 (TTY 711)
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and holidays
- **L.A. Care Cal MediConnect**
  - 1.888.522.1298 (TTY 711)
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and holidays
- **L.A. Care Community Resource Centers**
  - (Your Centers for Health and Wellness)
  - 1.877.287.6290 (TTY 711)

**L.A. Care Covered™**
- 1.855.270.2327 (TTY 711)

**L.A. Care Compliance Helpline**
- (to report fraud or abuse)
  - 1.800.400.4889 (TTY 711)
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and holidays

**L.A. Care Language/Interpreter Services**
- 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711)
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and holidays

**L.A. Care’s Nurse Advice Line**
- (for non-emergency medical advice)
  - 1.800.249.3619 (TTY 711)
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and holidays

**OTHERS**
- **Transportation Services**
  - (No Cost Medi-Ride to the Doctor)
  - 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711)
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- **Beacon Health Options**
  - (Behavioral Health Care)
  - 1.877.344.2858 (TTY 1.800.735.2929)
  - beaconhs.com
  - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- **TelaDoc®**
  - 1.800.835.2362 (TTY 711)
  - (Talk to a doctor for urgent care needs)

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, CALL 911**
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Health and wellness or prevention information

The benefit information provided is a brief summary, not a complete description of benefits. Limitations, co-payments, and restrictions may apply. Benefits may change on January 1 of each year. To learn more, please call the L.A. Care Member Services at 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711), 24 hours a day, days a week, and holidays.

Be Well is a member news publication by L.A. Care for members of L.A. Care’s Health Plan. If you would like the information contained in this newsletter in another language or another format, please call Member Services at 1.888.839.9909 (TTY 711), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including holidays.

Nondiscrimination and Accessibility Statement
L.A. Care complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.