IMPORTANT!
Be sure to call PHC’s Member Services
Department for any changes to your private health insurance plan through your work, private pay, or Senior Advantage health plan. Changes that are not reported could cause a delay when filling prescriptions or seeing your doctor.

Address change?
New phone number?
Let us know.

SUMMER 2015
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OUCH: Safer Management of Chronic Pain

In the last few years, scientific studies have given doctors new information on how best to manage chronic pain. These studies show that people who take some kind of pain pills for more than a month or two often develop changes in the nerves in their body and brain. Their body gets used to the medication, and it stops working to reduce pain.

In high doses, it actually causes the nerves in the body to start to feel pain with only light touch or normal body movement. This means that taking some pain medications for longer than a short time can actually cause pain. OUCH!

Since doctors have learned this, they slowly lower the dose of pain medication to help their patients. While patients will feel better once they get used to the new lower dose, for a while they will have more pain. OUCH!

Partnership HealthPlan of California has trained our staff to support the doctors in our network and help our members with chronic pain. We call them the OUCH team. OUCH stands for Outreach and Understanding Can Help. Medications are usually not the best way to treat chronic pain. What works better?

• Talking to a professional counselor
• Doing some gentle exercises
• Reducing the stress in your life
• For some people, acupuncture or chiropractic care may help

If you have questions about chronic pain and pain medications, contact your doctor or the PHC’s OUCH team at (800) 809-1350. ❖
Measles

In California, about 100 people have come down with measles so far this year. Many of them were exposed at Disneyland, or caught the illness from someone who was there. Almost all the measles patients had not been vaccinated against it. Although a lot of the people who got sick were children, many were adults.

Measles is an infection that:
• Causes fevers and rash
• Can infect the lungs, brain, and other parts of the body
• Can be a mild illness lasting a week or two, or it can be very serious, causing permanent brain damage or even death.

A shot to prevent measles came out in 1967. Before then, millions of people, mostly children, got measles each year. About 1,000 children became disabled and 500 died from measles each year.

After the shot came out, measles almost vanished from the United States. In 2004 there were only 37 instances of measles in the whole country.

Measles is very easily passed from person to person. The measles virus can live in the air or on surfaces for two hours. School-aged kids who have not gotten their measles shot can be infected just by walking through a room that someone with measles was in two hours before. People in the early stage of measles may look and feel very healthy, but they can still spread measles to others.

Doctors recommend that children get their first measles shot when they are around one year old. The second dose is usually given before the child starts school.

To keep your children and others safe, please make sure your child gets the measles shot. You may think their chance of getting measles is small, but measles is still causing problems.

Recipe: Turkey Meat Loaf

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. If you are using bread, place bread in a large bowl and pour the milk on top of it. Set aside to soften for 15 minutes.
3. Stir in egg, garlic powder, onion powder, oregano, basil, bread crumbs and chili powder to form a paste. Add the meat and mix well.
4. Pack the meat into a loaf pan, rounding the top like a loaf of bread.
5. Bake until brown and bubbly, about 45 minutes. If topping with sauce, add it here, and bake an additional 10 minutes to brown.

Well Child Visits – Infants to Teens

Even when your child is healthy, check-ups are important. They will help to keep your child healthy. You can discuss any concerns that you have. Your child’s doctor will review your child’s routine health, growth and progress and will give your child needed health services, such as:
• Health visits (head to toe physicals)
• Tests, such as vision, hearing, TB skin test and lab services
• Shots
• Tracking how well your child is growing
• Sending your child to other doctors if needed

For infants, many well child visits within the first and second years of life should happen, while children and teens should get a well visit once a year. With the help of on-going well child visits, your child’s doctor can often find and address health problems before they become worse.

Estate Recovery

The State of California must be repaid for Medi-Cal benefits from the estate of a deceased Medi-Cal member. This entails care received on or after the beneficiary’s 55th birthday. For Medi-Cal members enrolled (either voluntarily or mandatorily) in a managed care organization, the State must be paid the total premium/capitation payments for the period of time they were enrolled in the managed care organization. Also, any other payments made for services provided by non-managed care providers will also be recovered from the estate. For further information regarding the Estate Recovery program only, call (916) 650-0490, or seek legal advice.

PLEASE DO NOT CALL PHC OR YOUR ELIGIBILITY WORKER. He or she does not have this information, so they cannot help you.

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Seeking Members for the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC)

Are you a member who cares about quality healthcare for yourself and others? Then you may want to join Partnership HealthPlan of California’s (PHC’s) CAC!

What is the role of the Consumer Advisory Committee?

• To ensure PHC is responsive to the diversity of the health care needs of all members
• To provide input on member satisfaction survey results
• To help identify consumer concerns
• To provide input on current and potential benefits

Who can join the Consumer Advisory Committee?

• Eligible PHC Medi-Cal members
• Family members of those enrolled in PHC Medi-Cal

Meetings are held quarterly and are open to the public. If you are interested in joining the CAC, call PHC’s Member Services at (800) 863-4155.

Some PHC Meetings Are Open to the Public!

PHC has monthly and bi-monthly meetings with PHC Board Members, PHC staff, contracted providers and members like you. Some of these meetings are open to the public. If you would like to attend one of these meetings, call PHC’s Member Services Department for information about meeting times and locations.

New Medical Benefits From PHC to You

Effective February 1, 2015, Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC) added the benefits listed below for its members.

• Glasses – Lenses and frames every two years for PHC members. For more information about this benefit, call Vision Service Plan at (800) 877-7195. Members assigned to Kaiser should contact Kaiser.
• Podiatry Services – Provided by a podiatrist, when needed. Referral from PCP required.

If you have any questions, please call our Member Services Department at (800) 863-4155. We are available to assist you Monday-Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm.

New PHC Website

We are thrilled to let you know that at the end of March we launched our new website. It’s designed with a focus on members, doctors, community groups, and others. The new site mirrors our commitment to improving the health of our members and communities we serve.

A few new features you will find are:

• A scrolling banner on the home page for announcements
• Events and calendar on the home page and selected pages
• Community tab to give opportunities for you to engage with us
• Enhanced search options that lets you sort for relevant information

The new site will keep our current address, www.partnershiphp.org. We encourage you to visit the site and explore all the new features.

Who Are They and What Do They Do?

Understanding Medi-Cal can often be very confusing. We hope you find this article helpful in understanding the role of the three groups below.

State of California’s Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)

DHCS is the state department that works closely with Federal officials and State lawmakers to provide health care services through Medi-Cal. These services can include medical, dental, mental health, substance abuse services, and more. DHCS along with the Federal Government define the eligibility criteria for Medi-Cal services. If you would like more benefits by the State you can call the ombudsman line at (888) 452-8609.

Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC)

PHC contracts with DHCS to manage the Medi-Cal benefits for our members. PHC contracts with providers and specialists to provide health care services to our members.

If you have a question or concern please call Member Services at (800) 863-4155.

County Eligibility Workers

County Eligibility Workers help people apply for Medi-Cal and other county programs. You can apply for medical coverage online by using Covered California’s website at www.coveredca.com.

Interpreter Services for PHC Members

If you need an interpreter for your medical appointments, call your doctor or PHC’s Member Services Department to request this service. Face-to-face interpreting services are available. It must be approved by PHC in advance. It is not necessary to use children, friends or family members to interpret for you. PHC provides all written materials in English, Spanish and Russian. If your language needs have not been met, you have the right to file a complaint or an appeal by calling PHC’s Member Services Department. You can also go to the section on PHC’s website titled “How to File a Complaint, Appeal or Hearing Information.”
Struggling to Keep Your Commercial Health Insurance?

Are you between jobs and need help paying for your COBRA premium? Do you need help paying for your commercial health insurance coverage? Yes or No?

Do you or a family member have a serious illness? Yes or No?

If you answered yes to both questions, PHC may be able to help pay for your health insurance. Please call PHC’s Member Services Department at (800) 863-4155 and ask about the Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPPP) program.

Intimate Partner Violence
(Known as Domestic Violence)

✔ Are you worried about your relationship?
✔ Are you ever afraid of your partner?
✔ Does your partner tell you what to do and who to see?
✔ Has your partner ever threatened to harm you?
✔ Has your partner ever pushed or hit you, thrown things at you, or forced you to have sex?
✔ Does your partner threaten to have you deported?

You Are Not Alone
Abuse happens in all cultures, every country, and all age groups, and it may be happening to you. If you are being abused you may feel:

• Frightened
• Hurt
• Confused
• Disappointed
• Angry
• Ashamed or hopeless

Your partner might make it worse by blaming you. No one deserves to be abused or threatened. You may not be able to stop your partner’s abuse, but you can find help and get support for yourself.

What You Can Do
Talk with someone you trust; a friend, family member, or a clergyman or woman.

Put together an “emergency kit” of things you would really need if you had to leave quickly, such as ID, medicine, keys, and money.

Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (799-7233) to find out about domestic violence shelters and programs in your area. Call 911 if you are in danger.

Remember, you are the expert about your own life. Don’t let anyone talk you into doing something that’s not right for you. There is no excuse for intimate partner violence.

Pool Safety for You and Your Family

It’s summer and you may want to go for a swim! Swimming is a fun and relaxing way of cooling off during the hot summer months. Swimming can be good for your health. However, it’s important to take extra steps to keep you and your family safe. Here are some basic steps to follow:

• Stay within arms’ reach at all times in and around the pool
• Assign a water watcher for children
• Keep eyes on young children at all times
• Fence your pool; Use a 4-foot or taller fence with self-closing or a self-latching gate
• Swim lessons for all
• Make sure pool and gates have alarms
• Learn CPR – Free classes are offered at your local American Red Cross

Public Pool Safety
It is a Federal law that lifeguards are present at every public pool. If you go to a public pool and see no lifeguard, do not swim or allow your children to swim at this pool. Report the pool to the police.

Before jumping in the pool, make sure the water is clean. It should be very clear, with no floating objects. If you see any floating objects or the pool is a murky or cloudy color, do not enter the pool.

Check to make sure there are no tripping hazards. These would include pool chairs, goggles, fins, swimming noodles, clothing, shoes or anything else that could tangle up your feet. Move these things to a safe area, with permission of the lifeguard.

The last thing you should check before getting into the pool is if there are proper rescue devices. They should be easily obtainable and near the pool. Even with a lifeguard present, potential accidents can occur in a pool. Once you’ve entered the pool, watch your children and others carefully to make sure you or anyone else doesn’t cause a potential accident.

PHC Member Handbook
Your PHC Member Handbook explains the benefits and services that are available to you as a member of PHC. This handbook is mailed to all members at the time of enrollment. If you would like a copy of your Member Handbook, you can call PHC’s Member Services Department or visit PHC’s website at www.partnershiphp.org.
**Make Your Wishes Known**

Not too many people feel comfortable thinking about dying. But for every adult, it is important to spend a little time on this unpleasant subject. Specifically, we all need to decide what we want to happen when we get near the end of our lives, and we need to put our wishes in writing. We need to fill out what is called an Advance Directive.

Advance Directives lets us do two things. One, is to say how much medical treatment we wish to have when the end is approaching. Two, it lets us name which family members or friends we want to make decisions for us if we cannot make decisions for ourselves.

Both issues are very important. Each person has the right to make their own decision about how much or how little intervention they want at the end of life. There is no right or wrong answer for everyone. Each of us needs to have a trusted decision-maker who can work with our doctors when we cannot. This situation can easily happen to anyone who becomes gravely ill.

Not long ago, in a large survey of California residents, 70% of people said they would prefer to die at home, but only 32% of people do die at home. The main reason for this is that too many people have not put their own wishes in writing by filling out an Advance Directive.

Advance Directive forms can be found at your doctor’s office and on PHC’s website (http://www.partnershiphp.org/Members/Medi-Cal/Pages/California-Advance-Health-Care-Directive.aspx). Please consider filling one out and talk with your family about your personal wishes. Make copies of your Advance Directive for your doctor and family. You can always change your Advance Directive if your situation changes or your wishes for care change. If you are not sure how different choices might impact your quality of life, talk it over with your doctor.

**TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)**

TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), is a common sense approach to managing weight. TOPS also promotes maintaining good health. Enrolled members attend weekly meetings. They share tips on losing weight. They also exchange recipes. They encourage and support each other. The staff is all volunteers. The TOPS weight loss program is non-profit and non-commercial.

This program is offered to all eligible PHC members. Are you ready to stop dieting and start making real life changes?

Partnership HealthPlan will pay your membership for one year. Some TOPS locations charge a chapter fee (on average $5.00 per month). PHC does not pay chapter fees.

To join TOPS or get more facts, call PHC’s Member Services Department at (800) 863-4155.

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**PHC Board of Commissioners: Consumer Representatives**

Do you want to have an impact on health care in your community? Then consider becoming a PHC Consumer Representative. We are adding two consumer seats to our Board of Commissioners.

One representative will cover our Northern Region counties: Del Norte, Humboldt, Lassen, Modoc, Siskiyou, Shasta and Trinity.

One representative will cover our Southern Region counties: Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Napa, Solano, Sonoma and Yolo.

A consumer representative needs to:

- Be a current PHC member or a family member of a current PHC member
- Submit a completed application by the deadline
- Attend the six PHC Board meetings during the year
- Provide a consumer update at each Board meeting

Consumer Representatives are also encouraged to participate in the regional PHC Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, but not required.

Applications must be POSTMARKED by Friday, July 24, 2015 at 5 p.m.

For more information on how you could be a consumer representative on the PHC Board of Commissioners, go to http://www.partnershiphp.org/Community/Pages/default.aspx.
PHC Drug Formulary

PHC’s formulary is a list of drugs that are covered by PHC. These drugs are picked by doctors and pharmacists who are part of our Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee. This committee makes sure that the drugs chosen are proven effective, safe and cost effective.

All drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can be covered even if they are not on the list of drugs. If a provider wants to give a drug not listed, your pharmacy must send a Treatment Authorization Request (TAR) to PHC. The TAR must explain the medical reasons why a drug that is not on the list is needed. If the drug is denied, your doctor or pharmacist can contact PHC’s Medical Director to review the denial.

If a medication that you are taking requires a TAR, and it is approved by PHC, your pharmacy will need to resubmit a TAR for refill authorization.

PHC allows certain maintenance medications to be dispensed in quantities up to a ninety (90) day supply. Examples of maintenance medications are those medicines that are taken regularly for conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol. However, this does not include antibiotics and narcotic medications for pain, anxiety or sleep.

PHC’s Medical Director to review the denial.

The P&T Committee adds new drugs and makes changes to the list of drugs due to the availability of generic drugs. In almost all cases, generic drugs are just as effective as brand name drugs. PHC requires generic drugs for our members because they work the same as brand name drugs and cost less. This helps keep rising drug costs under control. Following are some examples of medications that have been recently added:

- Non-narcotic pain related medications such as diclofenac XR (generic Voltaren) and duloxetine (generic Cymbalta)
- Allergy medication such as triamcinolone nasal spray (generic Nasacort OTC)

Over the past year, PHC has been involved with a Managing Pain Safety program to decrease the potential harmful effects of narcotic (opioid) prescription use in our communities. PHC P&T has made the following changes for narcotic pain medications towards promoting safer use:

- Daily use quantity limits with a maximum 30-day fill supply
- The allowable time before the next refill will be at day 27 out of a 30-day supply

Additional Formulary information can be viewed on our website at http://www.partnershiphp.org/Providers/Pharmacy/Documents/Formulary/MCFormulary.pdf

Protect Your Child From Lead Poisoning

Lead is a very toxic metal, mainly for young children. It can affect nearly every system in your body. Small amounts can cause learning problems and major health problems. High levels can cause brain damage and even death.

What are some tips to protect your children from lead poisoning?

- Do not allow your child to put car keys in his/her mouth
- If anyone in your house works where lead dust could get on their clothes be sure that person changes clothes before hugging your child
- Keep your child away from peeling paint
- Be cautious when using items from other countries such as clay pots and dishes used for cooking. Some candies, spices, health remedies and cosmetics can contain lead when made outside of the United States.
- Candy containing tamarind, chilli powder or salt that is mined from certain parts of the world may have a higher chance of having increased lead level in the candy. These candies come mostly from Mexico, Malaysia, China or India.
- Wash toys, pacifiers and window sills often
- Wash children’s hands before eating

If you are pregnant:

- Do not use imported spices, snack foods, health remedies, cosmetics or clay pots. They may contain lead.
- Never eat non-food items such as clay, pottery, soil or paint chips
- Get a blood test if you think you may have been exposed to lead. Your unborn baby will have the same lead level as you.
- Children born to mothers with lead poisoning may have learning and behavioral problems

Lead has been removed from many household products and supplies in recent years. Still, it is a good idea to get a simple blood test at your doctor’s office that can detect lead poisoning. It is recommended that children between one and two years old are screened. Sometimes older children are tested as well. Ask your doctor if your child should have the test. If lead is found in the blood, the doctor might do a second test. Other members in your home might need to be tested too.

It’s important to know that high levels of lead require immediate medical treatment. Lead poisoning doesn’t end there. You will need to find the source of the lead and get rid of it. Your doctor can help with this.

To learn more, call the National Lead Information Center at (800) 424-5323. Also, lead detection kits are usually available at your local hardware store.

Medication Safety Tips

Each year over sixty thousand children under the age of five years old go to the ER. This is due to an accidental overdose of medicine. How can parents take action to protect their children?

Here are some helpful tips:

- Keep medicine out of the reach of children
- Keep proof of caps on the containers
- Think about other places where kids can get into medicine. Secure those places.
- Think about products such as diaper rash remedies, vitamins or eye drops. Store those out of the reach of children.

Put the toll-free Poison Help Number into your home and cell phone: (800) 222-1222. Keep this number handy for everyone in your home to find it easily.

Source: CDC’s Safe Healthcare Blog, 2012

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