



POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Health and Wellness Information for Members

Summer 2016



i In this Issue

- High Blood Pressure-Stay in Control
- Health Facts: How to Sort the Good from Bad
- Get the Most from Your Doctor Visits
- Plan Ahead with *Five Wishes*
- Close the Healthcare Loop
- Take Charge of Your Health
- Tips to Manage your Meds
- Think About Joining a Trial!
- Highlighted Medications this Issue: NSAIDS
- Prevention Points
- Special Needs
- Message from Your Health Plan

High Blood Pressure-Stay in Control

Blood pressure measures the force of your blood as it moves through your veins. High blood pressure is when your blood pressure remains raised over time. It is also called hypertension. Many people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) have high blood pressure. Many people have this health problem and do not know they have it.

High blood pressure is called the "silent killer" because there are very few symptoms. Many people have this health problem and do not know they have it. Even without symptoms, hypertension makes heart attack or stroke much more likely.

continued on page 2



P.O. Box 46160
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Member Services
Mon - Fri, 8:00am to 8:00pm
Tel (800) 263-0067
TTY/TDD: 711

continued from page 1

Tips to Check your Blood Pressure at Home

One good way to control high blood pressure is to track it over time. Ask your doctor to prescribe a blood pressure monitor for you. This machine lets you take your own blood pressure in the comfort of your home. Here are some helpful hints to help make sure the blood pressure readings you get at home are as precise as those from your doctor:

Before you begin

- Do not smoke, drink caffeine, or eat a big meal 30-60 minutes before you plan to take your blood pressure
- Wear loose clothing that is easy to roll up above the elbow
- Rest for 5 minutes before you start

When you take the reading

- Put your arm at heart level – use a table to rest or similar piece of furniture
- Relax Keep still and quiet. The reading can rise if you move or talk.
- Take two or more readings, at least two minutes apart.

After you finish

- Write down your blood pressure in a book or journal with the date and time you checked your blood pressure
- You should have two numbers for each reading
- Bring the numbers with you to your next doctor visit

Try to check your blood pressure at home at different times in the day. See if it tends to be higher or lower in the morning, midday or evening. Bring your blood pressure monitor with you to your doctor visit to make sure the reading matches the one in the office. The goal of you are trying to reach is anywhere from 120/80 to 139/89. If your blood pressure higher than 139/89, please ask your provider to retake your blood pressure. Talk to your primary care doctor about reaching this goal. Lower blood pressure is better.

Health Facts: How to Sort the Good from Bad

No matter how you stay up-to-date with current events, you will come across a lot of news and information about your health. New health facts, figures and tips come at us from our TVs, radios, papers and websites. Not all health facts in the media or online can be trusted.

How can you tell which facts are true and which are false? Does science support this health fact, or is it an attempt to sell you a new product? Good health is a top concern for many of us. This can make us easy targets for scams that promise to make our health concerns go away. Do not take new health information at face value.

You can double-check the value of new health information with a few rules:

- Look at the source. Does the information mention a research study or have the support of a group like the American Heart Association or American Cancer Society?
- Does it promote a product? Use caution if you are told that some new drug or device can help relieve a health problem.
- Ask your doctor. Your doctor can help you decide if new health facts you come across apply to you.

It is always the best to ask questions about any health information you find in the media. Not all of it is based on good science. Ask your doctor before you change any major part of your health routine.

Get the Most from Your Doctor Visits

The exam room can be a scary place sometimes. You might be worried about a health concern or stressed out about other problems in your life. Often, you must wear only a paper robe and may feel exposed. It helps when you can be open and honest with your doctor about what is happening with you.

Talk With Your Doctor

Some people have a hard time talking with their doctor. This could happen for many reasons:

- Worry the doctor might judge them if they ask questions
- Want to avoid a lecture about health issues like alcohol, smoking or pain
- Fear of bad news if they bring up concerns
- Feel like there is not enough time in the visit

One of the main reasons doctors went to school for so many years is to help people like you. They are concerned for your health and well-being. Your doctor is your partner in health. It helps when you are able to trust one another.

Come Prepared

Your visits can go smoothly when you come prepared. This is true for routine visits and when you have a new health problem. When you come into the office:

- Arrive early to complete any forms before the exam
- Bring a written list of questions for your doctor
- Bring a list of your medications and your blood pressure readings
- Ask any other questions that come up during the exam
- Share any signs or symptoms that you feel
- Bring your Health Plan ID card
- Write down what your doctor asks you to do after the visit

You can get the most out of your doctor visits when you follow these few simple guidelines. Be sure to keep all your scheduled doctor visits.



Plan Ahead with *Five Wishes*



It is not easy to think about what will happen at the end of your life. The topic of death and dying is hard to face and harder to talk about with your loved ones. It helps when you have taken the time to make a plan.

Five Wishes is an advance directive or

living will. An advance directive lets you plan your healthcare choices ahead of time. Your doctor and loved ones will know your choices if you are too sick to make them yourself. They will know just what types of treatment you want and how you wish to be cared for.

A living will lets you have more power and control over what happens to you when you are very sick.

You Have the Right to Direct Your Care

When you fill out the *Five Wishes* form, you can:

- Talk with your family, friends and doctor about what you would like to happen if you get very sick or have a bad accident
- Let them know your wishes so they do not have to make hard choices without you
- Make sure your needs are met if you get very sick

How Can You Make Your *Five Wishes*?

The form is easy to fill out and comes in many languages. Ask your doctor or RN Care Manager for your own *Five Wishes*. They can:

- Give you a *Five Wishes* form
- Tell you how to fill it out
- Put it in your medical record in case you need it
- Help you fill out a new form if you change your mind

Close the Healthcare Loop

Using the healthcare system can be a complex process. It is easy to get confused or fed-up by all the rules to follow for the care you need. Things can get tricky when you need to visit other doctors or go to the hospital.

Here are things to keep in mind if you need special types of care:

- **Follow-up** when your doctor sends you somewhere for tests. Bring the test results back on your next visit if you can. Ask any Specialist you see to send your exam report to your doctor.
- **Stay in touch** with your Health Plan and your doctor if you need special care or a trip to the hospital.

- **Update your records** with your current contact information so we can get ahold of you if something comes up.
- **Follow your care plan** after you leave the hospital. Most hospital stays call for extra care when you get home. You will leave with a discharge care plan.

Your Health Plan is there to help you each step of the way. We want you to have the best care we can provide. Make sure to ask questions if you are not sure how your Health Plan works when it comes to special doctors or hospital stays.

Take Charge of Your Health

Most people in the US deal with one or more chronic disease. A chronic disease does not have a cure, but can be controlled with the right kind of care. High blood pressure, diabetes, HIV and arthritis are all forms of chronic disease. You can manage most chronic disease with medication, diet and exercise.

It can be hard to manage your health if you have more than one chronic disease. You can stay healthy when you have a plan and stick to it. Your doctors and RN Care Manager can help you set goals and make a plan to get the most from your healthcare:

- **Start small and grow.** Success with a small change can make you ready to take on a bigger challenge.
- **You know yourself best.** If you think there is a problem with your health or treatment, do not wait to get it checked out. Schedule a visit with your doctor or call the Nurse Advice Line.
- **Learn to ask for help.** Mental health is a big part of how well you manage chronic disease. Talk to your healthcare team if you feel anxious or depressed.
- **Stay on track.** Your treatment plan can be tricky when you have more than 1 or 2 health problems. You might need special tools to help remind you what you need to do and when you need to do it. Take your medication and attend your appointments.

We Have Your Back

Your Health Plan tries to make sure you have all you need to stay healthy and thrive. Our team of nurses, doctors, social workers and support staff all work as a team for your wellbeing. You will create a blueprint for your healthcare and medications to help you stay on the path to good health.

Sometimes a health problem will call for a stay in the hospital. Our care teams will make sure that you stay as long as you need to. We will work with your doctors to make your return home a success.

Get Involved!

You are the best person to speak out for your health. You will get the most out of your Health Plan when you take an active role. The best way to be active in your care is to ask questions. When you have a health concern, be prepared with questions for your doctor:

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why do I need to do it?
- What is this test for?
- When will I get the results?
- What are the side effects?
- What are the side effects of this medication?
- Does this med mix well with my other treatments?

Your doctor and your care team are your best resource for a healthy life. Connect with your healthcare team often to take charge of your health!



Tips to Manage your Meds

Medications (meds) are one of the best tools to help you live well with any chronic disease. HIV meds keep your T-cells high and viral load low. They also lower the chance that you will pass HIV to someone else. Most people with chronic disease must manage meds to treat more than one health problem.

Take Your Meds at the Right Time

- **Take them at the same time each day.** It matters that the right level of medication stays in your body at all time.
- **Set reminders.** Set an alarm on your phone or an alarm clock. This will help remind you when it is time to take your meds. You can also just keep a piece of paper and write down the last time you took you med.
- **Connect your meds to something you do daily.** For example, take them when you brush your teeth in the morning.
- **Plan ahead.** Take your meds with you when you go out. This way you will always have your meds with you, even if you are not at home.
- **Know how to take your meds.** If the bottle says, "take twice a day," you should take them 12 hours apart. For example, you could take them at 9AM and 9PM.

Take Your Meds the Right Way

- **Have a good system.** Use a pill box. See if your pharmacy has blister packs or baggies. This makes it easy to tell if you miss any meds.
- **Pay attention to what you eat and drink.** Some meds need to be taken with lots of water. Some meds should be taken with food.
- **Find a buddy.** Ask a friend or partner to check-in to see how you are doing. They can ask if you are taking your meds each day.
- **Ask for help.** Ask your Case Manager, Pharmacist or doctor if you are having trouble taking your medications.

Your Care Team Can Help

- Be honest! Tell your doctor or nurse about your mental health. It can be hard to manage your meds when you are dealing with depression or other issues.
- Tell your doctor if you have problems with alcohol or drugs. They may want to change your meds until you get help.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse if side effects bother you. They can help you figure out if another med works better for you. Do not stop your treatment unless your doctor tells you to.
- Your nurse care manager will go over all the meds you take once each year and after you get out of the hospital.



Think About Joining a Trial!

New drug trials and treatment studies start all the time. These help create better treatment for all people living with HIV/AIDS. There are many types of clinical trials. One may be perfect for you. Your doctor may ask you to join a trial. Think about it!

For more info call: California: (323) 913-1033

Special Needs

We know many of our members have special needs that make it hard to communicate with their healthcare team or Health Plan. Tell the doctor, nurse care manager or other member of your health home team if English is the not language you speak. We can call an interpreter who speaks your language. If you are deaf, hard-of-hearing or have other special needs, we can arrange a service to help us communicate with you. For your health, it is vital that you and your doctor or healthcare team understand each other. This service is free to you.



A Message from Your Health Plan

Your Contact Information

PHC California cares about you and your health. We need to know if you moved or got a new phone number. Please call Member Services to update your record any time you make a change.

Member Services

Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm • (800) 263-0067 TTY/TTD: 711

Medication Therapy Management Program (MTMP)

As part of PHC California, you are enrolled in the MTMP. This Program helps people who take many prescribed meds. The Program lowers the chance of mistakes and reactions with your meds.

Your health care team will be in touch with you and your doctor. They will explain the drugs that you take. Your doctor will know of safety issues with your meds. Any other health issues will also be handled. Your RN Care Manager will contact you to make an action plan for your meds. An action plan with your nurse care manager will help with any problems you may have. The action plan will let you know just how and when to take your meds.

Compliance Hotline

Help us look out for Medi-Cal fraud and abuse. For example, if your Explanation of Benefits lists charges that are wrong, call Member Services. Call our Compliance Hotline if you suspect fraud or abuse.

Compliance Hotline: (800) AIDS-HIV • (800) 243-7448

We want to hear from you!

The Client Advisory Committee is a great way to tell us what you think about your Health Plan! We welcome all health plan members and AHF Healthcare Center clients. You can share your questions, concerns and comments with our Health Plan leaders. We use your concerns to make your Plan better. Come to the next meeting to find out what your Health Plan can do for you!

California - Los Angeles

6255 W. Sunset Blvd, 21st Floor

To RSVP, call **Santiago at (800) 243-2101**

Food and drinks will be served.

Questions?

Contact Your RN Care Manager

Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:30pm

Tel: (800) 474-1434

Urgent After-Hours Nurse Advice Line

Mon-Fri, 5:30pm-8:30am and 24 hours on Weekends. Available 365 days a year.

Tel: (800) 797-1717