



POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Health and Wellness Information for Members

Spring 2017



i In this Issue

- **Pain Management: Be Healthy and Happy in the Face of Pain**
- **Safe Family Planning Answers**
- **Our Promise to Provide Quality Care**
- **Healthy Mind, Body and Soul**
- **Share Your Views**
- **Stay Well with Prevention**
- **What is peripheral arterial disease (PAD)?**
- **Prevention Points**
- **Do You Suffer from Nerve Damage?**
- **Think About Joining a Trial!**
- **Special Needs**
- **Message from Your Health Plan**



P.O. Box 46160
Los Angeles, CA 90046

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

Pain Management: Be Healthy and Happy in the Face of Pain

It is common for people to feel pain in their body at some point. Some people experience it more often than others and some feel pain each day. Often the pain will go away with time, rest, or with over the counter (OTC) medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen, and pain-relieving creams/rubs. Pain that stays in the body or returns over time can limit your daily activities and make you feel down. Pain may also be a sign that you have an illness that needs treatment. Most pain can be treated and cared for. It is important to see a doctor when you have pain for a long time.

What Kind of Pain Do You Have?

There are two basic types of pain.

- **Short-term (acute).** Pain that comes on quick and goes away in less than three months
- **Long-term (chronic).** Pain that does not go away or returns often. It can come on quick or slow over time.

Talk to Your Doctor about Your Pain

Talk to your doctor about any new acute or chronic pain. There are many kinds and strengths of pain. It is important to tell your doctor how the pain feels as best you can. A doctor can treat pain better when they know how it feels.

It can be hard to describe pain to a doctor. Here are words to help you talk about the pain:

- Aching
- Sharp
- Tender
- Deep
- Shooting
- Burning
- On- the- surface Pulsing
- Sore

continued on page 2



continued from page 1

How to Manage Pain

Your doctor will give you a treatment plan to manage your pain. Many pain treatment plans use medicines. OTC meds that treat mild to moderate pain well are Advil®, Tylenol®, and Aleve®.

Here are some basic tips to follow when you use any pain meds:

- **Take meds just like your doctor tells you.** Pain meds work when you take them at the right time and dose each day. Taking too many can hurt your liver and kidneys.
- **Only take pain meds that your doctor prescribes.** Do not use street drugs or a friend's meds. These meds can cause your body harm and make your pain treatment plan not work.
- **Keep a record of how well the meds work.** Take notes on when you take your meds and when you feel pain.
- **Talk to your doctor if you still feel pain.** Your doctor can refer you to a pain specialist or change your meds.

Many other treatments help stop pain too. The good news is these treatments are fun and help you enjoy life! Reduce your pain with these steps:

- **Get active.** Try to do 20 minutes of moderate physical activity three times each week. You can walk, lift weights, garden, bike, do yoga, or dance.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eat five or more servings of fruit or vegetables each day. They have lots of vitamins and minerals that can help fight pain and illness. Healthy weight can improve back and joint pain.
- **Cut down on stress.** Meditation, massage, music, visits with friends, and hobbies are all great ways to help heal pain.
- **Sleep well.** A good night's sleep can help relieve pain. You can rest better when you go to bed at the same time each day and aim for eight hours of sleep.



Opiates for Pain Management

If the OTC meds and other options do not relieve your pain, contact your doctor. The doctor will prescribe most appropriate meds for the pain you are experiencing. Opiates may be used for severe pain management. Common types are morphine, codeine, and oxycodone. If your doctor prescribes severe pain opiate meds, there are associated risks and side effects:

If you take opiates, you may feel:

- Anxious • Confused • Depressed
- Dizzy • Itchy • Sleepy
- Sick to your stomach, or even throw up

If you take opiates, you may have:

- Hot flashes • Irregular periods
- Less interest in sex
- Slow breathing that can lead to death
- Weakened immune system • Worse pain

If you take opiates, you may have trouble:

- Getting an erection • Having an orgasm
- Moving your bowels • Remembering things

If you take opiates, you may be at risk of:

- Addiction to the medication • Overuse

Tell your doctor about any side effects you may have.

Other Treatments for Chronic Pain

Before you use opioids to treat chronic pain, try safer and better methods first. These include drugs and non-drug treatments. Ask your doctor which options are right for you. Here are treatments for some common causes of chronic pain.

PAIN TYPE	NON-DRUG OPTIONS	DRUG OPTIONS
Lower-back pain	Stay active: walk, swim, bike, or do yoga. Try chiropractic care, physical therapy, acupuncture, or massage. Some people find cognitive behavioral therapy helpful. In most cases, lower-back pain goes away in about a month—even without treatment. If not, see your doctor.	Try acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen.
Migraine	To prevent a migraine, avoid things that trigger your headache. These may include alcohol and certain foods. Control stress: stay active, meditate, and breathe slowly and deeply. And make sure you get enough sleep.	If you get mild to moderate migraines, first try acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen. Or try a mixture of aspirin, acetaminophen, and caffeine as found in Excedrin Migraine and generic versions. If you get severe headaches, or get many in a month's time ask your doctor about prescription drugs.
Joint pain	Losing weight and staying active can reduce joint pain. They may even keep your arthritis from getting worse. Try a heating pad for stiffness and ice for swelling. A cane, walker, or over-the-counter knee brace can ease pain.	Ibuprofen and naproxen may work best. Acetaminophen may also help. Ask your doctor about prescription pain relievers that come in a skin cream form.
Nerve pain	Try physical and occupational therapy. If you have nerve pain from diabetes, be sure to keep your blood sugar in a healthy range.	You could try medication that is also used to treat seizure and depression. These can help with nerve pain, too. Also ask about a skin patch with lidocaine.
Fibromyalgia	Stay active, meditate, or do cognitive behavioral therapy. You can also try tai chi, which combines slow, gentle movements with deep breathing.	If those don't work, consider medication, which is sometimes used for seizures and depression.

This report is for you to use when talking with your healthcare provider. It is not a substitute for medical advice and treatment. Use of this report is at your own risk. Retrieved from Consumer Reports 2016.

Safe Care with Opiate Use

People can get hooked (addicted) on opiate meds if they misuse them. Some people have more risk for opiate addiction. People at risk are:

- Current drug or alcohol users
- People that used or abused drugs or alcohol in the past
- People with mental illness

If you are at risk for opiate addiction, it is important to tell your doctor. You can still get relief from pain by taking steps to prevent opiate addiction. Some options are:

- **Counseling.** Ask your doctor for a referral to a mental health specialist.
- **Self-help groups.** Groups like Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous help people stay sober.
- **Methadone treatment.** This option is best for people with heroin use problems.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued new recommendations to prevent abuse and over use of opiate pain medications. People who use a high-level of pain medication should discuss a pain management plan with their doctor or RN Care Manager.

For more information about the CDC's guidelines, please visit www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/patients.html

Safe Family Planning Answers

Many people think if you have HIV then it is not safe to try and get pregnant. There has been a lot of progress in recent years for PLWHA who want to start a family or have more children. There are also new options for PHP and PHC members who do not want to become pregnant.

Condoms and Birth Control

Condoms are the best way to prevent the spread of HIV and other disease. Condoms plus a second form of birth control is the best method if you do not want to become pregnant. Your Health Plan will now cover the cost of birth control pills and other contraception methods. It is best if you follow the doctor's orders for taking birth control. Birth control can be effective when used correctly. Women should not take birth control pills if they:

- Smoke and are over 35 years old
- Have high blood pressure
- Had a stroke, heart attack or breast cancer



Options for Safe Pregnancy

Women with HIV have more options now to reduce the risk they will pass the virus to their baby or their partner. Always talk to your doctor if you think you want to have a baby. There are many things to keep in mind. A woman needs to:

- Be in good health
- Take HIV meds
- Have an undetectable viral load
- Have a good social support system

Even with a low viral load, you can still infect your partner. Use condoms except on the days the woman is most fertile. There are test to show when a woman is most likely to get pregnant. Men with HIV can use a process called sperm washing to remove the sperm from the rest of the semen. Sperm themselves do not carry the virus and can be used to get a partner pregnant.

It is vital for pregnant women to see their doctors on a routine basis both before and after the birth. Routine pre-natal and post-natal care helps reduce the risk the baby will be born with HIV. Mothers with HIV should not breastfeed their babies since breast milk carries the virus.

For more information on safe family planning, visit AIDS.gov:
aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/staying-healthy-with-hiv-aids/friends-and-family/having-children/

Our Promise to Provide Quality Care

Your health plan is accredited by Accreditation Association of Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC). This means the Plan meets a set of national standards for quality care and service. AAAHC's goal is to help us improve the quality of health care we provide our members. This June we will renew our accreditation. You can write or call AAAHC if you have questions or something to share.

Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care, Inc.
5250 Old Orchard Road, Suite 200
Skokie, IL 60077
Telephone 847-853-6060
FAX 847-853-9028
www.aaahc.org

Healthy Mind, Body and Soul

Being mindful

Health is not only physical; emotional health can help you feel better and be healthy. New research done has shown that being thankful can help us feel happier, reduce stress and feel less isolated. It may also strengthen immunity, lower blood pressure and improve sleep. There are many things you can do to become more grateful. For instance, set aside five minutes at bedtime to write down at least five things you are grateful for. Practice this every day. It's not just about what things you have; it can also be about your personal gifts. Think of something bad that happened to you in the past and then think about how far you've come since then.

Read on to explore seven more simple techniques to maintain calm in the midst of the holiday chaos.

7 Ways to Reduce Stress with Healthy Habits

Healthy habits can protect you from some of the harmful effects of stress, according to the American Heart Association. Here are seven positive healthy habits you may want to practice in the coming weeks.

1. Talk with family and friends. Call or text people close to you to share your feelings, hopes and joys. Ask them to share theirs. A daily dose of friendship is great medicine.

2. Do something physical every day. Whether it's walking to work, raking leaves or running to catch a bus. It's good to do some form of physical activity on a daily basis. Regular exercise can relieve tension. Physically active people have a lower risk of depression. It's fun, too!

3. Remember to laugh. Whether you are laughing at a late show monologue or giggling over a comic strip in the morning paper, laughter does you good. It's a stress reducer, and good for you. Laughter improves circulation because you bring in more oxygen to your system. It aids muscle relaxation. It may even boost your immune system. Don't be afraid to laugh out loud at something funny, even if no one else is around.

4. Slow down. Try to "pace" instead of "race." Plan ahead and try to make enough time to get where you're going and get everything done. Keep in mind that crowded streets and bad weather can eat up precious time.

5. Give up bad habits. Too much alcohol, cigarettes or caffeine can all raise blood pressure. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. If you smoke, make a plan to quit. Don't rely on energy drinks or endless cups of coffee to get you through every day. They could rob you of needed sleep.

6. Practice giving back. Volunteer your time at a local charitable organization. Or give a friend a hand. Helping others helps you!

7. Smile. The mere act of smiling can help you deal with stressful situations more easily. Researchers put student volunteers in stressful situations and discovered that smiling students had the lowest heart rates and recovered from the stress the quickest. The next time you are stuck in traffic or are experiencing some other type of stress you might try to hold your face in a smile for a moment. Not only will it help you 'grin and bear it', but it might actually help your heart health as well.



Share Your Views

Your voice counts! This spring you might get a survey about your Health Plan in the mail. The survey may ask about your health or what you think about your Health Plan. All of the answers are put together in a summary. We are not told the details of who said what. Your answers will be private.

Your feedback helps us improve the care and services we provide. Two surveys that go out every year are:

- Health Outcomes Survey (HOS). This asks you about your health status over time. You may or may not get this every year.
- Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS). This survey asks you how you feel about your doctors, nurses, health plan and drug program.

Please take the time to fill out the surveys and send them back as soon as you can. Thank you!

Stay Well with Prevention

Positive Healthcare members have a many ways to stay healthy and prevent disease. Many types of disease can be treated better when they are caught early. This is called preventive health. Doctors can screen for many forms of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and mental health issues. By getting the right health services, screenings, and treatments, you are taking steps that help your chances for living a healthier life. Your age, health and family history, lifestyle choices (i.e. what you eat, how active you are, whether you smoke), and other important factors impact what and how often you need healthcare.

Your healthcare provider wants to make the most of your office visit to make sure that you are up to date for your preventive health.

The Annual Wellness Visit (AWV) happens each year after you are enrolled in the health plan for at least 12 months. You will create a prevention plan with your health care provider in your first AWV and then update it each year after. Your plan is designed just for you and your own health needs. Remember to visit your provider annually and monitor your health even if you feel healthy. It's time to take charge of your health! Schedule an appointment with your health care provider to discuss what screenings and exams you need and when you need them!

The Annual Wellness Visit covers many areas:

- History of health problems
- Risk factors for disease
- Current doctors and meds
- Written plan for preventive health
- Health advise and referrals

What is peripheral arterial disease (PAD)?

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is a narrowing or blockage of the arteries that causes poor blood flow to your arms and legs. When you walk or exercise, your leg muscles can get painful cramps. PAD is also called peripheral vascular disease. The most common cause is the buildup of plaque on the inside of arteries. Plaque is made of extra cholesterol, calcium, and other material in your blood. Over time, plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries, including those that supply blood to your legs. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, and smoking all add to plaque buildup. If plaque builds up in your arteries, there is less room for blood to flow. Every part of your body needs blood that is rich in oxygen. But plaque buildup prevents that blood from flowing freely. This starves the muscles and other tissues in the lower body.

Many people who have PAD don't have any symptoms. But if you do have symptoms, you may have a tight, aching, or squeezing pain in the calf, thigh, or buttock. Treatment for PAD relies mainly on healthy lifestyle changes and taking care to manage high blood pressure and cholesterol. You may need medicines to ease symptoms or to manage other health problems. In some cases, you may need surgery or a procedure called angioplasty.

When you have PAD, you have a high risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Making healthy changes along with taking medicines can help reduce this risk.

Lifestyle changes

- Eat healthy foods.
- Follow an exercise program.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar in a target range.
- Lose weight if you need to, and maintain a healthy weight.
- Manage your cholesterol and blood pressure if they are high. You may need medicines to help you do this.
- If you smoke, quit. It's one of the most important things you can do. If you need help, talk to your doctor about programs and medicines that can help you stop. We offer a support program called Quit for Life®. Learn more at www.quitnow.net/ahf



You can also see the newsletter online @:

PHP Florida: <http://positivehealthcare.net/florida/php/for-members/newsletter>

PHC Florida: <http://positivehealthcare.net/florida/phc/members/materials/newsletters>

PHP California: <http://positivehealthcare.net/california/php/for-members/newsletter>

PHC California: <http://positivehealthcare.net/california/phc/members/materials/newsletters>



Prevention Points

At AIDS Healthcare Foundation, preventive care has always been an essential part of your health plan. Preventive services include immunizations and screenings to detect possible diseases and help you stay well. Prevention is about staying healthy and preventing or delaying disease.

Some key preventative screenings include:

- ✓ Blood pressure screening for all adults
- ✓ Cholesterol screening
- ✓ Colorectal cancer screening for adults over 50
- ✓ Type 2 diabetes screening for adults with high blood pressure
- ✓ Mammograms every one to two years for women over 40
- ✓ Cervical cancer screening for sexually active women
- ✓ Osteoporosis screening for women over 60, depending on risk factors
- ✓ Immunizations for children from birth to 18 years
- ✓ Obesity screening and counseling for children

Do You Suffer from Nerve Damage?

Neuropathy [nur-ah-pa-thee] describes nerve damage to the outer nerves of the arms, hands, legs and feet. This nerve damage can make these parts of your body feel numb, tingle or burn. It is often very painful. As many as 1 in 3 PLWHA have some form of this disease.

Certain things put you at risk for nerve damage. HIV can have a direct effect on the nerves and cause damage. People with diabetes often suffer from neuropathy. Other risk factors include:

- Lack of vitamin B, mostly B12
- Alcohol abuse
- Infections or tumors
- Major surgery
- Some meds used to treat HIV and other infections

Nerve damage can be treated to reduce symptoms. Treatments for depression or seizures may help calm the pain from nerve damage. Tell your doctor if you have any numbness or pain in your feet and hands.



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

