



mercy care

HEALTH MATTERS

Spring/Summer 2023

Managing asthma

About 25 million Americans have asthma. Among them, more than 10 million asthma attacks occur each year.

Asthma is a chronic lung condition. It causes wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and coughing. If unmanaged, these symptoms can lead to asthma attacks and ER visits.

The best way to manage asthma is to have medication on hand and to avoid triggers. Some asthma triggers can be smoke, mold, pests and insects, pet hair and dander, dust mites and air pollution.

People with asthma also may need to be careful when doing physical activities. Colds, flu, bronchitis and pneumonia can make asthma symptoms worse and may require urgent care or emergency treatment.

If you regularly have breathing discomfort, check with your primary care provider (PCP). They can check your lungs, perform breathing tests and evaluate whether you have asthma.

Treatments

Short-term medications like inhalers and long-term treatments are available. Ask your PCP about options.

Check your home for issues that may trigger symptoms and remove them. You can also check weather apps for poor outdoor air quality alerts. Stay in or wear a mask on those days.

Sources: www.cdc.gov/asthma/pdfs/asthma_brochure.pdf; www.aafa.org/asthma-facts



Benefits of a healthy diet

Eating a healthy diet is important at every stage of life. For infants and children, healthy foods are needed for them to grow properly and learn good eating routines. For adults, eating healthy helps them prevent conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, obesity and certain cancers.

Eating healthy food also helps you think better and feel good, and it gives you energy.

What is in a healthy diet?

A healthy diet is made up of lean meats and proteins, healthy fats, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables of all colors. Watch this short video at youtu.be/eUR3x0PDFX0 to find out more about what's in a healthy diet.

You can also see a certified nutritionist at no cost to find the best options for you. Contact Mercy Care Member Services to find a nutritionist. Or find a doctor on our website at www.MercyCareAZ.org/find-a-provider.

Food resources in Arizona

In the greater Phoenix area, 1 out of 3 people doesn't have regular access to healthy foods. If you or someone you know needs food assistance, help is available.

Arizona Food Bank Network is a group of food banks, food pantries and agencies that offer food assistance and no-cost meals. Call **602-528-3434** for help or visit www.azfoodbanks.org/get-food.

Farm Express is a mobile produce market that provides affordable fruits and vegetables to people with little or no access to healthy food. Visit the website for a schedule and locations at mercyar.es/farmexpress.

Taking your medication the right way

Mercy Care wants you to be as healthy as possible so that you can enjoy life. One of the most important ways you can stay healthy is to take your medication as your doctor prescribed and take them on time.

The term used to describe if patients are taking their medication the right way is "medication adherence." Consistent medication adherence is important to your health. There are many diseases and health conditions that do not show their bad effects every day. These can include diabetes, high

blood pressure, high cholesterol and others. Since you do not "feel" the effects of these diseases all the time, it can be hard to remember to take your medications.

Here are some tips to help you:

- Keep your medications in a place that you remember to visit every day, like the cabinet next to your toothbrush.
- Unless your doctor tells you a specific time, take your medications when it is easy for you to remember. Make taking your medications part of your daily routine.

- Use a pill box and write on the pill box the time you are to take your medications.
- Use an alarm clock or an electronic device (tablet, smartphone) to remind you to take your medications.
- Have a family member or close friend help remind you to take your medications.

Always keep your medications away from children. If you have any questions about the medications you take, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Child dental health: Don't skip brushing — or checkups

Regular dental visits are important for people of all ages. Plaque forms from food and bacteria and causes dental decay (cavities). On average, Arizona children have five teeth affected by cavities. That's about 1 out of every 4 teeth in a child's mouth. Brushing and flossing doesn't get rid of all of the plaque that causes cavities.

That is why it is important to have your dentist clean your child's teeth. A teeth cleaning will remove what's left behind. Routine dental services are covered for members up to 21 years of age.

Your dentist can also catch problems early, when they're easier to treat. For example, cavities are easier to fill when they're small. And gum disease can be reversed if caught early.

When to see the dentist

Follow your dentist's lead on how often to take your child. Here's what experts usually recommend:

- **Babies.** Take your baby to the dentist after the first tooth sprouts. The American Dental Association says babies should see a dentist before turning 1 year old.
- **Children.** Most kids should see the dentist every six months.

During your visit

Tell your dentist if your child's health has changed. Medical conditions may affect teeth, especially if your child has:

- Tooth sensitivity
- Puffy or bleeding gums
- Persistent bad breath
- Pain or swelling in the mouth
- Dry mouth
- Diabetes, heart disease, an eating disorder or HIV
- A family history of tooth decay or gum disease

Sources: American Dental Association; Arizona Department of Health Services: Division of Public Health Services, Public Health Prevention Services, Office of Oral Health: Arizona School Dental Survey, 1999-2003; U.S. National Library of Medicine





Peer and family supports lend a helping hand

Each Integrated Health Home location has trained peer support specialists to assist members. These people are mentors who can relate to your friend or loved one.

The peer support specialist can help families and their loved one living with a serious mental illness (SMI) determination. Peer support specialists know the recovery process because of their own lived experience. Peer support specialists receive training on how to engage people in services to support their recovery.

Peer support provides members:

- Resources to connect with the community
- Tools to use in times of crisis

- Help with treatment and wellness plans
- An advocate who will work with their clinical team

There are also family support specialists who educate and guide you through the behavioral health system. A family support specialist is an advocate for your friend or loved one and for you. Family support specialists help give a voice to the member's family of choice. They give you the chance to explain your unique family situation.

Also, they can connect you with Mercy Care's other community partners that can provide services such as employment and housing support for your loved one. These community partners are members

of the treatment team that you will be able to interact and connect with for your friend or loved one.

Peers and families play an important role in helping members be as healthy as possible. That is why Mercy Care works with the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition, an organization of peer and family member advocates. The coalition makes sure individuals and families have a say in the behavioral health policy decisions that affect their community.

Want to learn more about how to get involved? Or about peer and family support resources? Just email the Office of Individual and Family Affairs at OIFATeam@mercycares.org.

For a behavioral health crisis

Mercy Care members can call the **Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- **1-844-534-4673 (1-844-534-HOPE)**
- Or text **HOPE** to **4HOPE (44673)**

Tribal Crisis Lines

- San Carlos Apache Reservation: **1-866-495-6735**
- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: **1-800-259-3449**
- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: **1-855-331-6432**
- Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: **480-461-8888**
- San Lucy District of the Tohono O’odham Nation: **480-461-8888**
- Tohono O’odham Nation: **1-844-423-8759**
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe: Tucson, **520-591-7206**; Guadalupe, **480-736-4943**
- White Mountain Apache Tribe: **928-338-4811**
- Navajo Nation: **928-551-0508**

Veterans Crisis Line: **988**, press 1

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**

National crisis text line: Text **HOME** to **741741** about any type of crisis, or go to **www.crisistextline.org/text-us**.

Teen Lifeline phone or text: **602-248-TEEN (602-248-8336)**

Crisis Line staff can help:

- Provide crisis support over the phone
- Dispatch a crisis mobile team to support you in the community



- Arrange for transportation to take you somewhere safe
- Help you arrange counseling or connection to your outpatient provider
- Provide options for dealing with other urgent situations

*Always call **911** in life-threatening situations.*

If you need someone to talk to: Call the Warm Line, **602-347-1100**. It’s a support line operated by credentialed peer support specialists. It’s available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

HIV and pregnancy: Why testing matters

Are you thinking about having a baby? Are you pregnant now? Be sure to get tested for HIV. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

A pregnant member who has HIV can pass the virus on to their child. This can happen while they are pregnant. It can also happen when they are giving birth.

If a pregnant member knows they are infected, they can take steps to keep the baby — and themselves —

well. Special medicines can help avoid passing the virus to the baby.

These medicines work best if you start them early. But if you can’t, they can still help if used before labor begins and the baby is born.

HIV testing is encouraged for all pregnant members, even those who don’t think they have HIV. People who have HIV may not have any symptoms for years at a time.

Learning your HIV status will help ensure that you and your baby are healthy. Ask your doctor about how to get tested. If you test positive for any STI (sexually transmitted infection) or HIV, your doctor can give you medication and help you find counseling. Testing, medication and counseling are provided at no cost to you.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Breastfeeding protects baby and birthing parent

The cells, hormones and antibodies in breast milk may protect babies from illness. This protection is unique and changes to meet your baby's changing needs. And breastfeeding can help you, too, by lowering your risk of type 2 diabetes, certain types of breast cancer and ovarian cancer. Breastfeeding may also help you lose pregnancy weight.

Learning to breastfeed takes time, practice and patience. A good latch is important for your baby to breastfeed correctly and for your comfort. During the early days of breastfeeding, it can take time for your baby to latch on well.

You can tell whether your baby is getting plenty of milk. They will be mostly content and will gain weight steadily after the first week of age. If you worry that your baby is not getting enough milk, talk to your baby's doctor.

You can take certain medicines while breastfeeding, but not all. Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist about medicines you are using, and ask before you start using new medicines. This includes prescription and over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and dietary or herbal supplements.

You can still breastfeed even after you return to work or school. Planning ahead for your return to work can help ease the transition. Talk with your employer about your options.

Resources for you

- The Arizona Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program offers food, nutrition counseling and access to health services for women, infants and children. Breastfeeding members may receive peer counselor support, an enhanced food package, breast pumps and other supplies. Call WIC at **1-800-252-5942** to see if you qualify.
- You can call the Arizona Department of Health Services Breastfeeding Hotline at **1-800-833-4642**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- La Leche League of Arizona offers support for birthing parents who choose to breastfeed. Call **602-234-1956**, or visit **www.llofaz.org**.

Sources: "Your Guide to Breastfeeding" from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Women's Health



Dangers of lead exposure

Lead in a person's blood can cause serious health problems. Lead poisoning is caused by breathing in or swallowing lead.

Lead can be found in:

- Paint and dust in older homes, especially dust from renovation or repairs
- Candy, makeup, toys, jewelry, glazed pots and traditional medicines made in other countries
- Work like auto refinishing, construction and plumbing
- Soil and tap water
- Spices, herbal remedies and ceremonial powders

Lead exposure during pregnancy

If you are pregnant, it's especially important to avoid exposure to lead. Lead can pass from a mother to her unborn baby. Too much lead in the body can:

- Put you at risk of miscarriage
- Cause a baby to be born too early or too small
- Hurt a baby's brain, kidneys and nervous system
- Cause a child to have learning or behavior problems

Dangers to children

Lead exposure in children can cause:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed growth and development
- Learning and behavior problems
- Hearing and speech problems

It's hard to tell if a child has been exposed to lead because no symptoms may be present. The best way to check for lead poisoning is by giving the child a blood lead test. Check with the child's primary care provider about testing.

Lead poisoning can be prevented. The key is to keep children from coming in contact with lead. If children are poisoned by lead, they must be treated. Learn how to prevent exposure to lead.

To find more information about lead poisoning, you can visit www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm.



Quality Improvement program delivers member care results

Mercy Care has a Quality Improvement (QI) program. This program sets goals to improve the health of our members and improve the quality of their care. Mercy Care uses data to see if we have met the goals. It is also important to us that members can access care easily.

If you are having trouble with your health care, please call and let us know. We want to make sure our members get the highest-quality health care possible!

Strengths:

- Helping members who have diabetes with their blood sugar levels

- Helping members who have high blood pressure to keep it in the right range
- Getting children dental care at least once a year
- Getting children a well visit at least once a year
- Making sure that members are satisfied with Mercy Care

Opportunities:

- Helping members not to take high doses of opioid medications for long times, when possible

You can call the phone number on the back of your ID card to learn more. We can also help you get a copy of this information in writing.

Family planning services

Did you know that Mercy Care covers birth control at no cost to you, for men and women of reproductive age? These services help protect against pregnancy. Some also help protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You can choose from these options — they're all covered:

- Birth control pills
- Injectable contraceptives
- Subdermal implantable contraceptives (under the skin)
- IUDs (intra-uterine devices)
- Diaphragms
- Condoms
- Foams
- Suppositories
- Natural family planning
- The morning-after pill
- Contraceptive counseling
- Sterilization (tubal ligation for women or vasectomy for men) for members 21 and older
- Pregnancy screening
- Screening and treatment for STIs (sexually transmitted infections) for both men and women

Ask your doctor about options for LARC (long-acting reversible contraceptives). You can choose to get family planning services and supplies from any appropriate provider. No referral is needed, and there is no charge to you for these services.

At-home care services

“The doctor will see you now” — in the comfort of your own home.

In-home and telehealth options are available to you if you don't feel well enough to leave the house or if a busy schedule prevents you from going to your doctor's office.

Telehealth

Call your doctor and ask if they offer telehealth visits. During a telehealth visit, the doctor can video call, voice call or chat via text with you to help treat your medical issue. Telehealth options are best suited for medical issues that don't require a physical exam. These are issues such as colds, flus, COVID-19, skin rashes, prescription refills, and therapy or counseling.

Full-service care options

These are some providers who will offer care in your home. They can send a mobile team to take vital signs and examine you for the doctor to evaluate. Their services range from primary care to complex care, as well as behavioral health.

SPG Virtual Care, 480-268-2670:

- Complex chronic care
- Routine medical care
- Urgent care
- Acute care
- COVID-19 testing and treatment
- COVID-19 monoclonal antibody treatment
- Post-discharge follow-up
- Children with special needs
- Remote patient monitoring

Spectrum Healthcare, 1-844-943-7387:

- Primary care
- Psychiatry
- Counseling
- Pain management
- Crisis
- Care management
- Hospital discharge follow-up

DispatchHealth, 480-295-4490:

- Urgent care services
- Infections
- Flu
- Pneumonia
- Migraines
- Dehydration
- UTIs
- COPD
- COVID-19

For a list of providers, visit www.MercyCareAZ.org and select “Find a Provider” at the top of the page to search the directory.





Quitting tobacco

Do you use tobacco? Quitting tobacco is one of the best things you can do for your health. If you get medication and coaching, you can double your chances of quitting tobacco. You can get help or coaching through group education, over the phone and by text messaging. You can get medication from your doctor.

Your doctor can also refer you to the Arizona Smokers Helpline (ASHLine) for coaching and resources to help quit tobacco. You don't need a referral to the ASHLine. The ASHLine can give you information to help protect you and your loved ones from secondhand smoke.

Many people have quit smoking and stopped tobacco use through programs offered by the ASHLine. If you want more information to help you or someone you know quit tobacco, you have choices. You can:

1. Call Mercy Care Member Services. For ACC members, call **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879 (TTY 711)**. For RBHA members, call **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465 (TTY 711)**.
2. If you are part of Mercy Care's Care Management program, talk to your care manager.
3. Talk to your doctor.
4. Call the Arizona Smokers Helpline (ASHLine) directly at **1-800-556-6222** or visit **www.ashline.org**.

There are other resources available for you to quit tobacco. Go to Tobacco Free Arizona at **www.azdhs.gov/prevention/tobacco-chronic-disease/tobacco-free-az/index.php**. Tobacco Free Arizona is a program to help Arizonans know the risks of tobacco use and resources for quitting.

HEALTH MATTERS is published for the members of Mercy Care. 4500 E. Cotton Center Blvd., Phoenix, AZ 85040.

This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

Call Mercy Care Member Services Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., or call for the 24-hour nurse line. Language assistance services, including TTY services, are available to members to ask specifically about utilization management issues. For example, if you have a question about the status of a prior authorization, call Mercy Care Member Services.

- ACC members, call **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879 (TTY 711)**.
- RBHA members, call **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465 (TTY 711)**.

www.MercyCareAZ.org

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Nondiscrimination Notice

Mercy Care complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. Mercy Care does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Mercy Care:

- Provides no-cost aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
 - o Qualified sign language interpreters
 - o Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides no-cost language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
 - o Qualified interpreters
 - o Information written in other languages

If you need a qualified interpreter, written information in other formats, translation or other services, call the number on your ID card or **1-800-385-4104 (TTY: 711)**.

If you believe that Mercy Care has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex, you can file a grievance with our Civil Rights Coordinator at:

Address: Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator
4500 East Cotton Center Boulevard
Phoenix, AZ 85040
Telephone: **1-888-234-7358 (TTY 711)**
Email: MedicaidCRCoordinator@mercycareaz.org

You can file a grievance in person or by mail or email. If you need help filing a grievance, our Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 1-800-537-7697 (TDD).

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.
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