



Promise Health Plan

# Cares Health Talk

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# Healthy and delicious meals on a budget



Feeding your family nutritious meals doesn't need to cost a lot. The key is stocking up on healthy staples like canned beans, whole grains such as brown rice, and a variety of canned and frozen vegetables. Choose low-salt or low-sodium options.

Then pick up a few fresh fruits and vegetables, along with dairy products like low-fat cheese and plain yogurt.

Here are some quick, healthy meal ideas.

## Bean and cheese tostadas

Mix canned beans (kidney or black), canned tomatoes, and grated low-fat cheese in a bowl. Add fresh cilantro. Place corn tortillas on a pan, and add some of the mixture to each one. Bake in the oven until the cheese melts. Top with salsa and plain yogurt.

**Why it's healthy:** Beans are a good way to get fiber and protein in your diet. Tomatoes are rich in vitamin C.

## Baked potato with toppings

Bake potatoes in the oven. Serve topped with steamed broccoli and low-fat cheddar cheese or black beans, salsa, and avocado.

**Why it's healthy:** Potatoes are a good source of potassium, vitamin C, and fiber (eat them with the skins on). Toppings turn baked potatoes into a filling meal.

## Stuffed dinner omelet

Make a large omelet. Stuff it with a variety of cooked vegetables, including peppers, squash, broccoli, spinach, and tomatoes. Add some low-fat cheddar or mozzarella cheese.

**Why it's healthy:** Eggs are a great source of protein. Vegetables are rich in vitamins and fiber and low in calories.

## Grain bowl

Cook brown rice or another whole grain like quinoa. Serve in a bowl with roasted squash, eggplant, mushrooms, or peppers. Add spinach or kale, plus chickpeas or canned tuna. Season with olive oil, herbs, and vinegar.

**Why it's healthy:** It's a fiber-rich meal that includes protein, whole grains, and vegetables. Olive oil is a heart-healthy fat.

## Food pantry services



Our L.A. Care and Blue Shield Promise Community Centers distribute free grocery items on a weekly or monthly basis. For locations, scan this code or visit [communityresourcecenterla.org](https://communityresourcecenterla.org).



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# How to talk to your teen about mental health

It's no surprise that many teenagers today are struggling with their well-being. In fact, 42% of U.S. high school students say they regularly feel sad or hopeless. And 29% say their mental health is poor.

What's behind these troubling numbers? Teens today face lots of pressures that can

## 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Are you or someone you love having thoughts of suicide? Call, text, or chat **988** to connect to the national Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Help is available 24/7.

make them feel anxious or down. There's school pressure, social media, balancing part-time jobs, peer pressure, and more.

Starting a conversation with your teen is key. "For youth who are struggling, I cannot stress enough the importance of feeling seen, understood, and that someone cares about you," notes David Bond, director of behavioral health for Blue Shield of California.

### Signs your child might need help

Teens who are depressed or anxious usually show signs something is wrong, including:

- Changes in sleep, weight, or eating habits
- Seems hopeless or sad all the time
- Has lost interest in things they used to enjoy, like sports or being with friends
- Seems withdrawn from friends and family
- Has trouble focusing or paying attention
- Feels very worried about things, or has fears they can't shake
- Snaps at you for no reason

One of these signs may not mean anything on its own. But if it's a pattern or something just doesn't feel right, it's time to have a talk.

### What to say and do

Tell your teen what you've noticed. Then listen to them. That will help your child feel understood. Let them know that they're not alone and that they can get better.

The best place to get help is through your child's provider. Pediatricians deal with mental health issues all the time. You can also call our behavioral health services to find mental health support that is right for your teen: **(855) 765-9701 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Mental Health America; American Academy of Pediatrics

# The latest on long COVID



It's been months since you came down with COVID-19. But you still feel really tired or are coughing a lot. You might have long COVID.

Most people get over a COVID-19 infection within a few days or weeks. But some have symptoms that last longer. Here are answers to four questions about the condition.

## 1. What is long COVID?

People with long COVID still have at least one symptom a month after their original infection, or they develop new symptoms. This is true even if they had a mild case. Symptoms can last for months or even years.

Scientists aren't sure why some people develop long COVID. What they do know is that long COVID can affect just about every part of your body, from your brain to your feet.

## 2. What are the symptoms of long COVID?

Since it can affect your whole body, there's a long list of symptoms. Many people just have

some of them. Common ones include feeling tired or worn down, shortness of breath, brain fog, loss of smell or taste, a pounding heart, and a cough that won't go away.

## 3. Who's most at risk of getting it?

Anyone can get long COVID, though some groups are at higher risk. These include:

- People who ended up in the hospital or got a really bad case of COVID-19
- People with an underlying health condition, such as asthma or diabetes
- People who didn't get the COVID-19 vaccine
- People who got COVID-19 more than once
- People of Hispanic or Latino heritage

## 4. Can you prevent long COVID?

The best way is to stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccines and boosters. This will help you avoid getting reinfected (or infected in the first place). If you're more at risk, take extra steps like wearing a mask and washing your hands regularly.

If you suspect you have long COVID, talk to your provider. There's no single treatment for this condition yet, but your doctor can create a plan to treat your specific symptoms.

## Earn your GED at no cost



Blue Shield Promise members have access to GEDWorks™, a special program that can help you get your high school equivalency diploma. Learn more at [blueshieldca.com/GEDworks](https://blueshieldca.com/GEDworks).

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Sources: National Institutes of Health; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Mayo Clinic



# Ask Dr. Nuovo

## Nervous about going to the doctor?

Expert advice from Jennifer Nuovo, M.D., chief medical officer for Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan

**Q** I don't like going to the doctor. I feel like they don't listen to me or explain things clearly. What can I do?

**A** There are a lot of reasons why visits with a doctor may feel uncomfortable. Sometimes it's a language or cultural barrier. It could also be the feeling of not having enough time. Doctors have to accomplish a lot during an appointment, which may not be in sync with what you want to discuss.

To make the most out of the time you have, come prepared. Here's how to do that.

### **Write your questions ahead of time.**

It's hard to remember what to say when you're on the exam table. So, jot down the five most important things to discuss. If it's a new health issue, focus on when your symptoms started, how often you feel them, and whether they're getting better or worse.

### **Bring your medications.**

That includes all medications that you're on, even if you only take some occasionally. Include vitamins and supplements too. You can also write down a list or snap a photo of each medication with your smartphone.

### **Speak freely.**

It's good to be honest with your provider, even if you have an embarrassing symptom. And don't be shy about asking your doctor to explain something another way if they are not clear or are using medical terms.



### **Bring support.**

Schedule an interpreter to be at your appointment. You could also bring a loved one to ask questions and learn how to care for you if needed. And if you want help finding a new provider, call Customer Service at **(800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### **Ask for a follow-up.**

If there wasn't time to discuss every topic, tell the doctor or nurse on the way out. Then you can figure out what comes next.

## Health education materials



You can get benefits notices and health brochures in your preferred language or in alternative formats. Call Customer Service at **(800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. You can also access our new health library by scanning this code with your smartphone or by visiting [blueshieldca.com/healtheducationlibrary](https://blueshieldca.com/healtheducationlibrary).



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# Would you know if you had high blood pressure?

Blood pressure may be something you don't think about until your doctor checks it. Yet, nearly half of all adults in the United States have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. And only 1 in 4 of them have it under control.

High blood pressure usually doesn't have any symptoms or signs. But it can damage many parts of your body, including your heart, brain, eyes, and kidneys. It also increases your risk of heart attack and stroke.

The good news? High blood pressure is treatable. That's why it's important to find out whether or not you have it.

**Your doctor can tell you whether your blood pressure is high.** Blood pressure is simply the force of your blood pushing against

your artery walls. A normal blood pressure reading is less than 120/80. When your numbers creep above that, it means you have elevated or high blood pressure.

**Some people are more likely to develop high blood pressure.** Certain factors can raise your chances. Some you can't do anything about, including:

- **Your age:** The older you are, the more likely you are to have high blood pressure.
- **Your gender:** More men than women have high blood pressure, until age 65.
- **Your family history:** If one of your parents or a sibling has it, you may too.
- **Your race or ethnicity:** African American and Hispanic adults tend to have high

blood pressure more often than white or Asian American adults.

**Healthy habits can help.** Lifestyle changes can help keep your numbers in a healthy range. Some of the big ones:

- **Move more.** Get regular physical activity, such as taking a daily walk.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese raises the odds of having high blood pressure.
- **Cut back on salty foods.** And don't drink too much alcohol.
- **If you smoke, quit.** It's bad for your lungs and bad for your blood pressure.

**Get your blood pressure checked at least once a year.** Your provider will measure it at your yearly physical. If it's elevated or high, your doctor will advise you on how to make healthy changes, such as getting more physical activity and eating right.

Medications can also help. If your doctor prescribes them, be sure to take them, even if you feel fine. They'll keep your numbers down and can help prevent serious health problems.

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Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; American Heart Association; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

## Live a healthier life

Wellvolution® is a digital platform with programs designed to help you eat healthy, lose weight, quit smoking, and reduce stress. Plus, it's available with your plan at no extra cost. To learn more, scan this code with your smartphone or visit [wellvolution.com/medi-cal](https://wellvolution.com/medi-cal).



# We're here to help

Your health is what matters most to us. We know health care can be complex, and our Customer Service team stands ready to answer your questions, listen to your concerns, or help you solve a problem.

We can do things like:



Help you get an authorization



Arrange a ride to a medical appointment



Help you if you receive a bill



Answer a question about your plan



Help you find a new doctor

Give our Customer Service team a call at **(800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## Renewing Medi-Cal

The county reviews your Medi-Cal eligibility every year. Your coverage will be automatically renewed if they can verify you electronically. If not, you'll get a renewal package in the mail. Let us know if your contact information has changed, so you can stay enrolled. Call **(855) 636-5251 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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# Interpreting services

We offer free interpreting services to our members over the phone and in person, including ASL. You can have an interpreter at your doctor's appointment. Please schedule five days in advance. Phone services are available 24/7. You can also file a grievance if we don't meet your language needs. To request, call Customer Service at **(800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## Health education programs

We offer classes that help you learn to eat healthier, be more active, and better manage your health conditions. There is no cost to join. You can also speak with a Health Educator by phone to get individual help. To learn more, call Customer Service at **(800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, and ask for the Health Education Department.



## Community resource directory

We offer members a listing of community resources and agencies. It has information about agencies that can help you with issues like domestic violence or elder care. If you would like a copy, call Customer Service at **(800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan is contracted with L.A. Care Health Plan to provide Medi-Cal managed care services in Los Angeles County. You can get this document for free in other formats, such as large print, braille, or audio. Call (800) 605-2556 (TTY: 711), 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. The call is free.

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