

2024 **VOLUME 1**

Perspectives

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VHP Advisory Board



Join Our Advisory Board to Help Inform a More Equitable Future

Have you ever thought about helping to shape the future of VHP and influencing how we serve our members? What ideas or insights would you bring to the table? Joining the VHP Advisory Board gives you the chance to make a real impact.

The advisory board is a group that helps VHP improve the member experience. By joining, you can help ensure VHP meets community needs and delivers high-quality care to the people who depend on us. The board is made up of at least 51% VHP members and meets online four times a year. Suggestions are regularly reported to VHP's governing body.

"We want to hear from you," says Martha Cisneros, VHP Service Operations Director/ VHP Advisory Board Chairperson. "You can help to shape a more fair and inclusive future for all of our members."

To learn more, call Member Services at **1-888-421-8444** and ask to speak to the Member Services Manager about the advisory board. You can also email memberservices@vhp.sccgov.org.

VHP Member Tools

Complete Your 2024 Health Risk Assessment

Take charge of your well-being in 2024 by completing your Health Risk Assessment (HRA) at www.vhpconnect.org.

This survey helps us understand your needs and identifies potential health risks, enabling us to determine what programs and services might benefit you. The HRA also empowers you to reflect on behaviors, discuss concerns with your doctor, and identify future health risks. After completion, our case management team may assist you in scheduling appointments, catching up on screenings, or connecting with relevant programs.

Start your journey to a healthier you by completing your HRA at www.vhpconnect.org!

VHP is here to support you every step of the way. For questions or help completing your HRA, contact case management at **669-263-4754** or casegmt@vhp.sccgov.org.



VHP Connect

VHP launched an online member portal, VHP Connect (www.vhpconnect.org), and now you can easily access all your health information in one place!

What can you do online through VHP Connect?

- View plan eligibility and benefits.
- Find network doctors and pharmacies.
- Estimate cost of services.
- Access your digital member ID card.
- Check the status of authorization requests.
- View claims and coverage information.
- Check your out-of-pocket expense balances.
- Update your profile and demographic information.
- Communicate with VHP Member Services

How can you access VHP Connect?

- Register online at www.vhpconnect.org.

- Or access VHP Connect on your phone by scanning the QR code:



- You can also access VHP Connect on your phones and tablets by downloading the MyChart app for free on the App Store or Google Play Store. Select Valley Health Plan from the drop-down menu when signing into the app.



Health and Wellness



What to Know About High Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood against artery walls. Arteries carry blood from your heart to other parts of your body. If your blood pressure gets too high, it makes your heart work too hard.

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is blood pressure that is higher than normal. It is recommended that everyone maintain blood pressure below 120/80. Your blood pressure changes throughout the day based on your activities. When your blood pressure measures consistently above normal, it may result in a diagnosis of high blood pressure.

“The thing is, most people don’t even realize they have high blood pressure,” says Alvaro

Morales, MPH, a VHP Health Education Specialist, “There are normally no warning signs or symptoms. The only way to know is to have it checked and confirmed at a doctor’s office.”

The higher your blood pressure levels, the more at risk you are for other health problems like heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. Speak to your doctor to learn your personal blood pressure goal.

Causes and Problems

The most common cause of high blood pressure is unhealthy lifestyle choices, such as a lack of regular physical activity, a diet high in salt, smoking, and alcohol use. High blood pressure can develop over time and damage your health in many ways. It can harm organs such as your heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes.

How to Control Your Blood Pressure

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Weight loss will help reduce your blood pressure.
- **Eat healthier.** Eat more fruit and veggies. Look for healthier options, such as items with low-fat dairy and less saturated and total fat.
- **Reduce sodium.** Ideally, stay under 1,500mg a day.
- **Get active.** Aim for at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily, such as walking.
- **Limit alcohol consumption.** Drink no more than one to two drinks daily.

Monitor Your Blood Pressure at Home

Home blood pressure monitoring may benefit those diagnosed with high blood pressure, those with risk factors for high blood

pressure, or those with conditions related to high blood pressure. Those who are pregnant may also benefit from home monitoring because they may be at risk for pregnancy-induced hypertension or preeclampsia. Talk to your doctor to learn more about home blood pressure monitoring.

High Blood Pressure and Smoking

Smoking raises blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Smoking can also damage the heart and blood vessels. If you currently smoke and you quit smoking, then you will lower your risk of heart attack, stroke, and other diseases affecting your nerves, kidneys, and mouth.

Valley Health Plan (VHP) is committed to supporting members who want to stop using tobacco products. Members can join VHP's Tobacco Cessation Support Program, where they can learn how to manage and cope when trying to quit. The program is led by VHP Education Specialists virtually and in person.

To learn more about the Tobacco Cessation Support Program, contact the VHP Health Education Department at **1-669-220-5235** or healtheducation@vhp.sccgov.org.

Talk With Your Doctor

Many health problems, if caught early, can be reversed through lifestyle changes. When you learn more about your health, you are more equipped to make better health choices.

"If you have high blood pressure, keep working with your doctor to help lower it," says Morales. "But remember to be patient. It's not a quick fix and it may take some time to reach your blood pressure goal."

Schedule your yearly health exam and remember to ask about your blood pressure.



Breast and Colorectal Cancer Awareness

Cancer affects 1 in 3 people in the United States. Chances are that you or someone you know has been affected by cancer.

"You are made of trillions of cells that grow and divide to produce new cells," explains Dr. Nidhi Gupta, VHP's Chief Medical Officer. "When cells are abnormal or get old, they usually die. Cancer starts when something goes wrong in this process, and your cells keep making new cells, but the old or abnormal ones do not die when they should."

Cancer is a complex disease, and there are many types. Cancer can develop in any part of the body and is named for the body part where it started. For example, cancer that begins in the breast is known as breast cancer, even if it spreads to other parts of the body.

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the second most common cancer for those assigned female at birth after skin cancer. Cells in the breast start to grow out of control. This can cause the cancer cells to take up space that would usually be filled

by healthy cells, which can make it hard for your body to work the way it should.

Breast Cancer Risk Factors

Age and gender are the main factors that influence your risk for breast cancer.

“While cisgender women and people assigned female at birth display the highest rates of breast cancer, it can be found in all genders. Everyone has breast tissue,” says Dr. Gupta.

Most breast cancers are found in people who are older than 50. Other risk factors include a personal history of breast cancer, or certain non-cancerous breast diseases, and a family history of breast or ovarian cancer.

Breast Cancer Screenings and Exam Types

While some people may experience symptoms, many individuals with breast cancer show no signs of the disease, so it is important to get screened regularly. While breast cancer screening cannot prevent breast cancer, it can help find the disease

early, which can improve the chances of successful treatment. There are a few different exams that can be done to check for breast cancer:

- A **mammogram** is an X-ray of the breast and chest, and it may find tumors that are too small to feel. For many people, mammograms are the best way to find breast cancer early, when it is easier to treat and before it is big enough to cause symptoms.
- A **clinical breast and chest exam** is an exam of the breast and chest by a doctor or other health professional. They will feel the breasts and underarms for lumps or anything else that seems unusual.
- **Breast and chest self-exams** are a step-by-step approach a person can use to look at and feel their breasts or chest to check for anything abnormal.

Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is the third most common type of non-skin cancer in all genders. It is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States after lung cancer. It most often occurs in ages 65-74. Colorectal cancer means malignant tumors in the colon or rectum. These cancers may start as growths called polyps on the colon or rectum lining. Some polyps can become cancerous.

Colorectal Cancer Risk Factors

Many factors influence your risk, including a strong personal or family history of colorectal cancer and certain types of polyps. Talk to your doctor to learn about other risk factors.



Colorectal Cancer Screenings and Exam Types

Screening exams for colorectal cancer are important in detecting polyps before they turn into cancer and identifying it early when treatment is most successful. According to the American Cancer Society, individuals at a higher risk of developing colorectal cancer should begin screening before the age of 45, be screened more often, and receive specific exams. Those who are not considered high-risk should start regular screening at age 45.

There are a few different tests that can be done to check for polyps and colorectal cancers:

- **Stool test**, which looks for tiny amounts of blood in feces that cannot be seen visually.
- **Sigmoidoscopy**, where a flexible, lighted tube with a lens is used to examine the rectum and sigmoid colon and remove tissue if needed.
- **Colonoscopy** is like the sigmoidoscopy exam, but it examines the entire colon and removes tissue if needed.
- **Virtual colonoscopy** uses a special X-ray machine to take pictures of the colon and rectum from outside the body.

Screening for breast and colorectal cancer saves lives. With the advances in medical science, many people with cancer can now be treated successfully and go on to lead full, healthy lives afterward. Call your doctor's office to schedule an appointment or to learn more about cancer screening.



Vaccines and Immunizations

Post-Public Health Emergency COVID-19 Benefits

During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE), Valley Health Plan offered members enhanced COVID-19 benefits at no cost. The federal PHE for COVID-19 ended on May 11, 2023. Per state guidelines, several changes began on Nov. 12, 2023.

What You Need to Know

As of Nov. 12, 2023, VHP members will still be able to get COVID-19 tests, vaccines, and therapeutics without prior authorization or cost-sharing when accessed through in-network doctors and pharmacies.

Getting Your COVID-19 Vaccine at a Retail Pharmacy

You can now get your COVID-19 vaccines at retail pharmacies including Walgreens, Safeway, Costco, and CVS. Please schedule a time with the pharmacy over the phone or online, and remember to bring your VHP

Member ID card. You can also get your COVID shots at any Valley Medical Center pharmacy scheduling an appointment online at: myhealthonline.sccgov.org.

What's Changing

COVID-19 testing, vaccines, and therapeutics are subject to cost-sharing when services are received from an out-of-network provider.

You can get free over-the-counter COVID-19 test kits from in-network pharmacies. If the in-network pharmacy does not have kits, VHP will reimburse members up to eight over-the-counter COVID-19 tests per month when received out-of-network. The maximum reimbursement for each test per member is \$12. This includes all costs, such as taxes and shipping fees.

If you have any questions, contact VHP Member Services at [1-888-421-8444](tel:1-888-421-8444) or memberservices@vhp.sccgov.org.

Why Vaccines Are Important for Children

Vaccines Keep Kids Healthy

Vaccines prevent many illnesses and diseases that can cause long-term health issues in children. These issues can include blindness, hearing loss, brain damage, and even death. In addition, children younger than five who get the flu are much more likely than adults to have to go to the hospital. It is especially important for infants and young children to be protected.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommends that children receive the following vaccines by age 2:



- Hepatitis B (HepB)
- Rotavirus (RV)
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and whooping cough (pertussis) (Tdap)
- Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)
- Pneumococcal Disease (PCV)
- Polio (IPV)
- COVID-19
- Influenza (Flu)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- Hepatitis A (HepA)

Vaccines Protect Others

Children who are not vaccinated can spread illnesses to others, such as newborns, older adults, and people with chronic health issues.

Vaccines Can Prevent Lost Wages

When children get sick, parents and guardians may have to take time off work to care for them. Time off work can lead to lost income and added stress on the family.

For more information on recommended vaccines for each age group, visit: [cdc.gov/vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines). You can also talk with your pediatrician to find out which vaccines your children need or if you have any questions about your children's health.

If you have any questions about whether VHP will cover the cost of a vaccine, please contact VHP Member Services at **1-888-421-8444** or email memberservices@vhp.sccgov.org.

Medi-Cal Updates

Medi-Cal Covers More

Starting in 2024, more people will qualify for full Medi-Cal health coverage, including adults ages 26 to 49, no matter what their immigration status is.

Medi-Cal is a program that helps people with low incomes pay for health care services. Medi-Cal may help cover the costs of doctor visits, prescriptions, vaccines, mental health care, substance use treatment, eye care, glasses, dental care, hearing aids, rides to the doctor, home care, care for people who need long-term help, emergency care, and visits to specialists.

If you have family or friends of any age who live in California, have a low income, and need health coverage, they may qualify.

Applicants Must:

- Live in California
- Meet income and household requirements. Low-income requirements can vary depending on the situation. Each family household is different, so people who are interested should contact their local Medi-Cal office for help.



Residents with restricted Medi-Cal should watch for a letter from their county. It will specify whether their coverage will automatically change to full Medi-Cal or if more information is needed. Those currently on Medi-Cal should make sure their contact information is up to date.

Assets

New and renewing applicants will not be required to disclose assets in 2024. Assets include cars, houses, and bank accounts.

Apply for Medi-Cal

Tell your friends and family that they can apply for Medi-Cal online, in person, or by mail.

California residents can see if they qualify or apply by visiting: [GetMedi-CalCoverage.dhcs.ca.gov](https://dhcs.ca.gov) or calling a local Medi-Cal office:

- Monterey County: **877-410-8823**
- San Benito County: **831-636-4180**
- Santa Clara County: **408-758-3800**

Not Eligible for Medi-Cal?

Santa Clara County residents not eligible for Medi-Cal or other insurance can explore the Primary Care Access Program. Learn more at: vhpn.sccgov.org/PCAP.



AAAHC Accreditation

Valley Health Plan Awarded AAAHC Accreditation

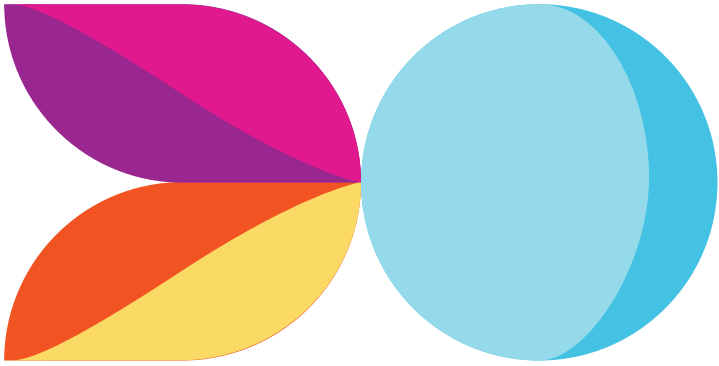
Valley Health Plan was awarded accreditation for three years by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC). This demonstrates VHP's commitment to delivering the highest quality and service to its members and upholding excellence in business practices. VHP is proud to have met the challenge of accreditation and is determined to consistently offer quality, affordable health coverage plans to individuals and families. For more information about AAAHC, visit aaahc.org.

More Important Resources and Information

At VHP, we know that keeping up on how to get the most out of your health plan is important to you. So, we have made it easy. To find all your health information in one place, access our new member portal, VHP Connect, at vhpcconnect.org.

For information on the following subjects, visit valleyhealthplan.org > **Members Tab** > **Forms and Resources** or valleyhealthplan.org > **Members Tab** > **Benefits Handbooks**.

- Advance Health Care Directive
- Affirmative Statement About Financial Incentives
- Autism Care Management Program
- Change of Address
- Choosing and Changing Your Primary Care Practitioner (PCP)
- Chronic Condition Management Program / Care Management
- Combined Evidence of Coverage
- Coordination of Benefits
- Emergency and Urgent Care Services
- Grievance and Appeals Process
- Language Assistance
- Lock-In Provision
- Member Rights and Responsibilities
- Non-Discrimination
- Protected Health Information
- Provider Directory / Search
- Self-Refer Services (Direct Access)
- Timely Access
- Waste, Fraud, and Abuse



VHP Valley
Health Plan