

**SD VERSION**



Promise Health Plan

# Cares Health Talk

Fall 2023

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# Your biggest questions about telehealth, answered



Technology can make it even easier to get the medical care you need. About 1 in 4 patients use telehealth to “visit” with their healthcare providers. And that number is growing. Haven’t tried telehealth yet? Here’s what you need to know to get started.

## Q. What is telehealth, anyway?

**A.** It’s a way of connecting with a provider remotely, instead of going into a doctor’s office or urgent care. You can use your smartphone, tablet, or computer for a video chat. Or you can talk with a provider by telephone. You can even send messages via an online portal or an app.

## Q. When is it a good option?

**A.** Your provider will let you know which visits can be done remotely. But telehealth can be a good choice when you need care right away and it’s not an emergency. You can use it for mental health visits and check-ins about chronic conditions. It’s also handy if you get sick when you’re traveling.

## Q. What are the benefits of telehealth?

**A.** You can’t beat the convenience, especially if you have small children. And it saves time because you don’t have to drive to a doctor’s office. Not sure if you or your child needs an in-person visit? A telehealth appointment can help you decide.

Virtual visits are easy to schedule. Ask your doctor’s office what options they offer. You can also get a same-day appointment with the Teladoc service.

## Q. What happens during a virtual visit?

**A.** The same thing that happens in your doctor’s office. Your provider will ask you questions. You’ll talk about your symptoms or concerns. The only difference is that you and the doctor are in different places.

## Q. What if I’m not good with technology?

**A.** Don’t worry. Your provider’s office will email you a link or other information on how to connect. You can also get a tech-savvy family member or friend to help. If something goes wrong, call your doctor’s office.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; American Medical Association

## Get 24/7 support

Use Teladoc to talk to a doctor or pediatrician. You can often get an appointment within the hour. Just log in to the Blue Shield app or call **(800) 835-2362 (TTY: 711)**. Or speak to a registered nurse on our Nurse Advice line by calling **(800) 609-4166 (TTY: 711)**.



# Handy guide to flu and COVID-19 shots

The COVID-19 pandemic may be over, but lots of people are still catching the virus. And the flu comes around every fall and winter, no matter what. Luckily, vaccines can help your whole family stay healthy this season.

Anyone can get the flu or COVID-19. But people in these groups are at the highest risk of becoming seriously ill:

- People age 65 and older
- Pregnant women (flu and COVID-19 can be dangerous for mom and baby)
- Those with chronic conditions, like asthma or diabetes. Other at-risk groups: People with cancer or obesity.
- Kids under 5

Even if you’re not at high risk, don’t skip your flu or COVID-19 shot. It’s safe and convenient to get them at the same time.

## Flu vaccine

Each year, scientists figure out which flu viruses will be most common and make a vaccine to attack them.

**Who should get it:** Everyone 6 months and older, with rare exceptions.

**When:** The best time to get it is September or October. But it’s never too late. Getting your shot later in flu season still offers protection.

**What kind:** There are several types. Nasal sprays are for ages 2 to 49. The regular flu shot is for ages 6 months to 64 years. The high-dose flu shot is for people 65 and older. Ask your doctor which is best for you.

## COVID-19 updated vaccine

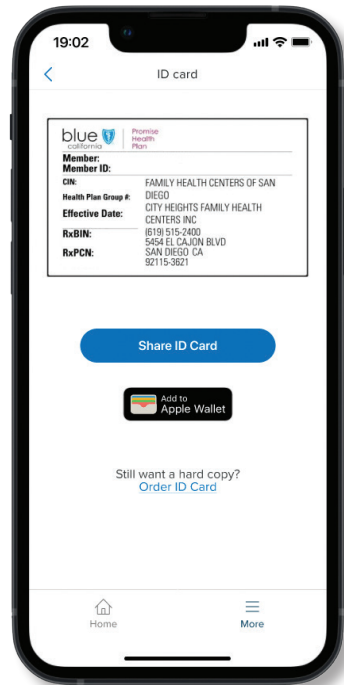
The COVID-19 virus is always changing. So the vaccine is changing, too. There is an updated vaccine this fall. It targets the newest Omicron variants that are circulating around the world.

**Who should get it:** Everyone age 65 or older should get one updated COVID-19 vaccine to be up to date.

**When:** If you already got one updated COVID-19 vaccine, you may get a second dose four months or more after the first. Talk to your doctor if you are not sure whether (or when) you need a second dose.

Need help getting an appointment? Call Customer Care at **(855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday. Need a ride to an appointment? Call our transportation services line 24/7 at **(877) 433-2178 (TTY: 711)**.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; American Academy of Pediatrics; National Institutes of Health



# 4 great reasons to download the Blue Shield app

Want to access your healthcare information anytime and anywhere? Download the Blue Shield of California Mobile App to your phone. It puts everything you need to know about your plan at your fingertips.

We think you'll love it. Here are a few handy things you can do on the app:

**1 View your member ID card.** Never get caught without your ID card again. You can quickly display your card on your phone. You can also order or print new cards with a simple tap.

**2 Find a doctor.** The Find a Doctor tool makes it easy to search for a primary care doctor near you. You can also find an urgent care clinic, dental and vision providers, and more.

**3 Check out your personalized health plan.** Make healthy habits easy with our free Wellvolution programs. Or order a ride to a doctor's office. You can do it all in the app.

**4 Access telehealth care anytime.** Have a health concern? You can use the app to request a Teladoc consultation. You can also call a registered nurse from the app. The app makes it super easy to connect to a telehealth provider from home, when you're traveling, or anywhere at all.



The mobile app is easy to use and it's a snap to download. Just go to the App Store or Google Play. To learn more, scan this code with your smartphone.



## We're here to help

Your health is what matters most to us. We know health care can be complex, and we're here for you. Do you need help with an authorization? Do you have a question about your plan? Maybe you need a ride to a medical appointment. Give our Customer Care team a call at **(855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday.



## Ask Dr. Cruz

Want to give your child the healthiest start?

We have expert advice from Dr. James Cruz, MD, Chief Medical Officer for Blue Shield of California Promise Health Plan.

**Q** How often does my young child need to go to the doctor?

**A** Well-child checkups are the secret ingredient to keeping kids healthy. From birth until age 4, kids should have 13 well-child visits. Seven of those visits happen in the first year.

As they turn from babies to toddlers to preschoolers, kids grow and change fast. So regular checkups are crucial. They're a chance to ask about sleep, behavior, or other concerns. They also help you with:

### Staying on top of vaccines

Vaccinations protect your child from diseases like measles, mumps, and polio. They prevent outbreaks in schools and communities, too. Little ones need to get their shots on schedule. They may also need tests, like regular lead screenings.

### Tracking your child's growth

The doctor will weigh and measure your child to see if their height and weight are on target. For example, childhood obesity is common. If their weight has climbed too much, ask about nutritious snacks and the best activities for their age and interests. Your doctor might explore medical issues that may cause weight gain.

### Watching their development

Your doctor will track big milestones, from rolling over to taking that first step. How is their speech and language? What about



hearing and vision? If you have concerns, your doctor can evaluate your child and refer you to a specialist if needed.

### Keeping your child safe

Your doctor will ask if car seats are properly installed for your child's weight. Other topics: bike helmets and playground safety.

### Protecting your little one's teeth

A nutritious diet and good dental hygiene are key to healthy teeth. Fluoride varnish can help prevent cavities, too. The pediatrician or dentist can apply varnish at least twice a year (and up to 3 times yearly) starting at age 1.

## Health information in your language

You can get benefits notices and health brochures in your preferred language or in alternative formats (such as braille, audio CD, large print, and data CD). To access these services, call Customer Care at **(855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday.

# Tips for breastfeeding success



Breastfeeding has many health benefits. Breast milk provides great nutrition for your baby and is easy to digest. Nursing is a cozy way to bond with your little one. Plus, it protects babies and moms from certain illnesses and diseases.

But it can take time to get the hang of it. If you're struggling, talk to your doctor or call the maternity program at **(888) 802-4410 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. WIC also offers lactation education and assistance. Call **(800) 852-5770**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. And try these tips for common breastfeeding problems.

The challenge	The reason	The tip
<b>You're tired.</b>	Nursing is a big job. Your baby will breastfeed 8 to 12 times a day.	Ask family members to change diapers, give baths, and help around the house so you can rest.
<b>Your baby is distracted.</b>	Feedings take longer because your baby keeps poking their head up and looking around.	Help them focus on feeding by turning off the TV, dimming the lights, or finding a quiet place.
<b>Your nipples are sore.</b>	It's common in the early weeks. Possible causes: Poor latching, or your skin might be too dry or too moist.	Wear a bra made from natural fabric, like cotton. Avoid harsh soaps. Apply olive oil or lanolin ointment to your nipples.
<b>You're worried your baby isn't getting enough milk.</b>	It can be hard to tell. But if you nurse regularly and don't supplement with formula, most moms make plenty of milk.	Look for these reassuring signs: Your baby seems happy after feedings; they're gaining weight; you can see them swallowing.

Sources: National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## It's Medi-Cal renewal time

Your Medi-Cal plan helps you and your family stay healthy and strong. Make sure you keep your coverage. During the pandemic, your plan was automatically renewed each year. That's because the country was in a public health emergency. Now that has come to a close, and so has automatic renewal. So to stay in your plan, follow these simple steps:



Check your mailbox for your yellow member renewal packet.



Follow the instructions in your packet.



Complete the form and send it back right away, no later than 60 days.



Remember: If you don't return your form, you can lose your coverage.



Don't take a chance on losing your coverage. Be on the lookout for your renewal packet in the mail and send in your form as soon as you can.

Questions? Call Member Retention at **(855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday.

### 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 Care at **(855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday.

# Meet our Care Management team

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When taking care of your health becomes complicated, you don't have to go through it alone. Blue Shield Promise's Care Management team is here to help at no cost to you. They can support you in many ways, like:

- Answering questions
- Managing day-to-day health needs
- Coordinating your care with your doctor
- Helping you meet your health goals

Call **(877) 702-5566 (TTY: 711)** to speak with a Care Management Coordinator. You can call from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.



## Living well information line

We can answer your questions about high blood pressure, cholesterol, weight control, nutrition, diabetes, and quitting smoking or vaping. Please call Customer Care at **(855) 699-5557 (TTY: 711)**, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday, and ask for the Health Education Department.

App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc.

Google Play is a trademark of Google LLC.

Nurse Advice Line is a healthcare advice line. Nurses do not provide medical services for treatment or diagnosis.

You can get this document for free in other formats, such as large print, braille, or audio. Call (800) 699-5557 (TTY: 711), 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday. The call is free.

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