



The Consumer Connection

Fall 2023

Public Authority Services
by Sourcewise



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How to Avoid This Season's Flu

By Shannin Prather

The crisp chill in the air and the crunch of fallen leaves means that autumn has arrived, and winter is on its way. It also means that flu season is coming. However, you can take steps to avoid catching the flu this season.



Flu—the short name for the influenza virus—is an illness that can spread through communities quickly, can be severe, and even life-threatening. Children with certain medical conditions and all older adults are at a higher risk for catching the flu due to weakened immune systems. People with chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or immune deficiencies can experience worsened flu symptoms.

The flu is easily passed on from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or touching a surface that has the virus. You can prevent catching the virus by following simple actions like washing your hands often, wearing a face mask when in crowds or doctor's offices, avoiding being around people who are sick, not sharing utensils or drinking glasses with others, and using antibacterial wipes on items before using them.

Flu symptoms often include fever, headache, tiredness, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and body aches. The best way to avoid the virus is to get a flu vaccination. According to the National Council on Aging and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the flu vaccination is the best way to help protect yourself and others from the flu.

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It takes about two weeks for a flu shot to fully take effect to prevent an illness. It is recommended that you get your vaccine as early in the season as possible. If you have not yet had a chance to get your flu shot, it is never too late. Flu season peaks between December and February and may carry over into spring. If the flu virus is in circulation, getting a flu shot may be valuable.

Check with your doctor or insurance carrier to find out what your options are for getting a flu shot. Vaccinations are often free of charge with medical insurance, including Medi-Cal, and may be conveniently available at a nearby pharmacy.

Prepare for Medicare Changes in 2024

By Marcelo Espiritu

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) is open now through December 7, 2023. The Sourcewise Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) offers services by appointment over the phone and by video conference. Face-to-face appointments are also now available at Sourcewise offices (on a limited schedule) and at select community centers and libraries.

Each year, drug and managed health plans may change premiums, benefits, and out-of-pocket costs (like deductibles and copayments/coinsurance) for the upcoming year as described in your September “Annual Notice of Change”.

The AEP allows existing Medicare recipients to look at their previous Medicare selections and adapt as needed:

- Change, enroll in, or drop a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan (PDP)
- Enroll in or change a Medicare Advantage (MA) Part C HMO or PPO plan for its extra benefits and managed network
- Leave the managed Medicare system of MA Part C and instead use Original Medicare, a PDP, and Medigap for greater physician, provider, or facility flexibility

HICAP counselors can help you review changes, identify options, and plan your Medicare to meet your needs for 2024. HICAP will host AEP presentations called, “Medicare’s 2023 Annual Enrollment Period and Updates

for 2024” via Zoom and at various community organizations throughout the county to keep you informed about the latest plan options and changes.

To prepare for an appointment, create a [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) account, especially if you take several medications. You can then view your Medicare history, including a list of recently filled prescriptions. HICAP Counselors can more quickly help you find the lowest cost drug plan on the Medicare.gov Plan Finder.

Save money on Medicare Part D drug costs through the Low-Income Subsidy program (also called “Extra Help”). To qualify for partial Extra Help, monthly income must be less than \$1,823 for singles and \$2,466 for couples. Or apply for Medi-Cal, which includes Extra Help for Medicare recipients and has effectively similar income limits.

Sourcewise HICAP counseling is free, unbiased, and available to Medicare-eligible Santa Clara County residents. To attend “Medicare’s 2023 Annual Enrollment Period and Updates for 2024” presentations, visit the Sourcewise website at mysourcewise.com/calendar. To schedule a one-on-one counseling session with a HICAP counselor, visit our [Medicare Counseling Appointments webpage](#) or speak with a Community Resource Specialist at (408) 350-3200, option 1 to book an appointment with a HICAP counselor.

Spend Time with Nature to Help Improve Well-Being

By Shannin Prather

With the summer temperatures having cooled, it is now more comfortable to be outside and is a good opportunity to spend more time in nature. For people of all ages, time spent outdoors has proven to have many health benefits.

According to the [American Psychological Association](#), time spent surrounded by nature may also improve memory and attention. Even nature sounds, like birds chirping or rain falling, have been shown to improve focus and reasoning.

From enjoying flowers and trees on a stroll around the block to a day trip to the ocean, spending time in nature may improve mental and physical well-being and has been linked to lowering stress and blood pressure, uplifting mood, and feeling more empathetic and cooperative.

For children with special needs, time in nature can aid physical, emotional, and social skill development, as well as thinking and reasoning skills, according to studies by the nonprofit organization [Children & Nature Network](#). For older adults and adults with disabilities, studies have shown that time in nature can

lower anxiety, stress, symptoms of depression, and negative thoughts while raising feelings of relaxation and creative problem solving.

When possible, try to go outside at least once per day. Some ideas include walking, gardening, sitting in a park, or simply spending time enjoying your own yard or outdoor space. To get deeper into nature, consider asking a loved one to join you for a day trip to our nearby forests, bay shores, or beaches.

If you struggle to get outside due to physical limitations or live in an area with little access to natural outdoor spaces, try bringing nature inside. Indoor plants, nature sounds from mobile phone apps, open windows for breezes and bird song, and even landscape pictures hung on a wall can have positive effects on emotions and peace of mind.

Learn more about Santa Clara County open spaces and parks by visiting parks.sccgov.org/about-parks. To learn about accessible parks and discounted California State Park passes available for disabled individuals, seniors, and distinguished veterans, visit parks.ca.gov.

Community Resource Highlight: Inclusion Support WarmLine

The Inclusion Collaborative of the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) believes every person has the right to equal access to quality learning and community environments.

Providing support in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin, the Inclusion Support WarmLine offers free supports for parents, teachers, and community members working with children of any age who have disabilities and other needs.

This free program provides referrals to local resources, agencies, and services; resources for transitions between programs (such as elementary to middle school); technical assistance and support to ease access to services; referrals to inclusive community activities, and more.

Learn more and connect with WarmLine by visiting inclusioncollaborative.org or calling (408) 453-6651.

Lower the Risks for Type 2 Diabetes

By Hunter Nguyen



According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 37.3 million Americans, or 11.3% of the population, had diabetes in 2019. In the same year, diabetes was the seventh leading cause of death in the United States.

Diabetes is a disease that makes it harder to make or use insulin. Insulin helps control our blood sugar levels. Without insulin, our body's blood sugar levels can be too high, which can lead to serious health problems.

According to the [American Diabetes Association](#) and the [National Institute on Aging](#), symptoms of diabetes include tiredness, blurred vision, needing to pee more often, feeling more hungry or thirsty, and slower healing from cuts or bruises. Diabetes can also raise your risk of other health problems, such as heart disease, kidney issues, eye problems, nerve damage, and strokes.

There are two main types of diabetes. With type 1 diabetes, the body produces little to no insulin. Type 1 diabetes is usually found when people are children or young adults, who then have diabetes for life. With type 2 diabetes, the body either does not make enough insulin or does not use insulin well. Some risks for type 2 diabetes include having a family history of diabetes, lack of regular exercise, and being overweight.

Often, before type 2 diabetes is diagnosed, a person may have prediabetes. Prediabetes is a serious health condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. About 96 million American adults—more than 1 in 3—have prediabetes and more than 80% don't know they have it. A person who knows they have prediabetes can make changes to delay or prevent type 2 diabetes.

The risks of becoming a type 2 diabetic can be lowered by lessening sugar and saturated fats in food and being physically active for at least 30 minutes a day. It is recommended to eat foods with healthy fats, such as nuts, seeds, fish, and avocado, and choosing olive oil for cooking. Limiting foods that are fried, high in salt, high in sugar, and fats that are solid at room temperature, such as meat fats, dairy, and coconut oil, is also recommended.

The risks of becoming a type 2 diabetic can be lowered by lessening sugar and saturated fats in food and being physically active for at least 30 minutes a day.

Make exercise part of your daily routine. Walking, swimming, bike riding, gardening, and sitting exercises are all low impact forms of physical activity that can make a big difference in preventing type 2 diabetes.

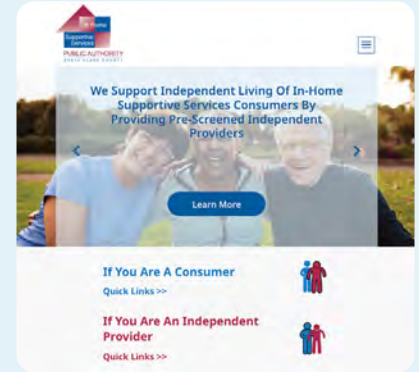
For more information, visit the [American Diabetes Association \(*diabetes.org*\)](#) and the [National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases \(*www.niddk.nih.gov*\)](#) websites.

New Look for the Public Authority Services Website

By Shannin Prather

Clear information and easy access to Public Authority (PA) Services is high priority for PA. One recent step toward this goal has been to update and improve the PA website.

To make it easier to move through the PA website and access the specific knowledge and support that website visitors need for In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Independent Provider (IP) enrollment, provider benefits, lists of enrolled IPs on the Registry for consumers to hire, and access to training, the website has been given a much-needed makeover.



The PA website is not only a hub for connecting with our services; it also provides information on the IHSS Advisory Board, Sourcewise, and links to additional community organizations that may have resources to support IHSS consumers, providers, and their loved ones.

The web address for the updated website has not changed. Take a tour by visiting pascc.org and enjoy the new experience.

Safely Dispose of Unused Medications

By Vi Lam

A 2023 [CivicScience](https://www.civicscience.com) poll reported that 70% of Americans take at least one daily medication prescribed by a doctor. Medications are used to treat and manage chronic conditions and improve health and well-being. However, medications are considered a hazardous waste. Expired and leftover medications can be harmful to people and the environment if not correctly disposed of.

When these medications are not safely disposed of, others can accidentally consume the medication, which can lead to poisoning, addiction, and even death. Medication that is thrown in the trash or is flushed down toilets or sink drains can get soaked into the ground and end up in our water supply. Water that has not been fully treated to remove these chemicals can end up in our drinking water or food from farms and gardens, which can be very dangerous.

In 2008, the U.S. government recognized these risks and acted on the need to safely deal with unwanted or expired medications with the creation of secure drop-off locations, which led to the 2015 Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance. Through the [MED-Project](https://www.med-project.org), a group of medication makers was created to provide secure disposal of unwanted medicine across California.

National Prescription Take Back Day on October 28, 2023 can be a reminder for everyone to clean out our medicine cabinets and safely get rid of unneeded medications.

Find a drop-off kiosk near you by visiting [MED-Project.org](https://www.med-project.org) or calling (844) MED-PROJ to dispose of unwanted medications in a free, convenient, and safe way. Homebound and disabled individuals can also contact the MED-Project to request a pre-paid envelope to mail in medications for safe disposal.



Public Authority Services



Public Authority Services by Sourcewise www.pascc.org
Phone: (408) 350-3206 Fax: (408) 296-8340 E-mail: info@pascc.org

Important Phone Numbers

Public Authority Services by Sourcewise

Information concerning provider benefits, bus pass, training or other services of the Public Authority.
(408) 350-3206

IHSS Social Services

Information regarding authorized hours and services or to speak with a social worker.
(408) 792-1600
IHSS.SCC@ssa.sccgov.org

Sourcewise Information & Awareness

Information on available services in Santa Clara County.
(408) 350-3200, option 1

Public Authority Services Registry

Call the Registry if you need help finding an IHSS care provider.
(408) 350-3251

Adult Protective Services

24-hour Hotline.
Call for help, if you or someone you know suspect abuse of a senior or dependent adult.
(408) 975-4900
(800) 414-2002

UNION SEIU Local 2015

Representing providers. Call for information about the Union and dues payroll deductions.
(855) 810-2015

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