



## Dear Aspire member,

2020 has been a year for the record books, and we have all been challenged to one degree or another with multiple life-changing events. When taken together, most of us have had to deal with anxious feelings and emotions in our daily living. This is why it is more important than ever to support one another, and encourage family, friends, and acquaintances with the hope that 2021 brings a respite. This will depend on each of us taking personal accountability to follow the guidance for preventing infections, even when we become tired. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle by staying active, eating right, and accessing healthcare when you need it is more important than ever to fight the COVID-19 fatigue.

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As a subsidiary of the two principle health systems in Monterey County, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula — Montage Health, and Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System (SVMHS), Aspire Health Plan is monitoring advisories and impending distribution of vaccines for the COVID pandemic, and we will take all possible steps to communicate and, ultimately, ensure you can receive a vaccine that is safe and effective when it is available. Regardless of timing, Aspire partners with your doctors and health systems to be the resource for all of your healthcare needs.

I want to reassure you that the state of Aspire Health Plan is healthy and growing. While the health plan had to make premium changes for

2021, the plan's parents (Montage Health and SVMHS) are fully committed to the future of this organization — and fulfilling our mission to improve lives in our communities by delivering exceptional care and inspiring the pursuit of optimal health. We have you to thank for bringing us this far in just 7 years of operations, and we look forward to continuing to serve you well into the future. We can't do it without your support and feedback. For this reason, we encourage your comments so we may continue to improve, and meet your needs. In this spirit, please let us know how we are doing by contacting us or responding to our surveys.

**Thank you from each of us at Aspire, and we sincerely wish you a healthy, happy 2021.**



Warm regards,  
Scott R. Kelly  
Chief Operating Officer

## Your feedback counts

### **YOUR FEEDBACK ON SURVEYS HELPS IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CARE AND SERVICES.**

You may receive a Medicare Health Outcomes Survey this spring, with questions about your health and well-being. Participation in this survey is voluntary, however, we strongly encourage your participation.

Only a small number of members receive a survey, so every survey returned is important. Your feedback gives us direction, letting us know where to focus our efforts.



# DON'T FEED THE DIABETES!



**In Monterey County, up to 45% of adults have prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.**

While the risk of developing these conditions increases with age, there are many preventive measures that can help us avoid or delay their onset. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, modest weight loss can reduce the risk of diabetes by 70% in adults over the age of 60. For those who already have diabetes, healthy lifestyle activities like losing weight and managing high blood pressure can reduce the risk of complications.

Aspire Health has launched a type 2 diabetes awareness campaign aimed at educating our community about this serious health condition. The campaign is designed to get the public's attention, to inspire action, and to encourage our community members to connect to local resources or see their doctor.

We invite you to visit the campaign website to learn more. The website includes a diabetes health risk assessment, health education, success stories from our neighbors, and an email sign-up option to stay connected with campaign updates. You can also connect to Aspire Health's Diabetes Prevention Program and other local resources. Aspire's benefits support those with diabetes with low-cost insulin and programs to promote healthy lifestyle choices.

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One of our recent Diabetes Prevention Program participants shares her story on the campaign website, explaining: “I am very grateful for this program because it changed my life and it transformed my family. I learned that small steps make a big difference in making it easy to change your habits. I started losing weight and, after six months of being in the DPP, I lost 19 pounds — without crazy diets or pills or beverages that cost a lot. My health coach provides me with support and resources to help me prevent diabetes. And participating in the program cost me almost nothing.”

**AS A MEMBER OF ASPIRE HEALTH PLAN,  
CALL (831) 644-7490 TO LEARN MORE.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT  
[WWW.DONTFEEDTHEDIABETES.COM](http://WWW.DONTFEEDTHEDIABETES.COM)**



## Anticipating needs and empowering your journey

At Aspire Health Plan, our goal is to support your well-being with the kind of care and expertise you value and trust. That's a tall order, so we collaborate with local hospitals and trusted partners to create a team of people with your best interests in mind.

### ANTICIPATING YOUR NEEDS



Your **primary care doctor (PCP)** will reach out to new members at the start of the year and to existing members later in the year, to schedule your Annual Wellness Visit.

By scheduling your Annual Wellness Visit early in the year, you can create a plan for addressing recommended preventive screenings, which can be scheduled throughout the year.



Aspire also partners with **AdvantMed** to offer a wellness and prevention program called Health at Home. Health at Home is a no-cost, in-home assessment with a licensed clinician.

This visit is a wonderful complement to the Annual Wellness Visit with your primary care doctor.



To check on your prescriptions, **SinfoniaRX** pharmacists and technicians often reach out to members with certain chronic conditions. We want to make sure

you are on the best medicines for your medical conditions and that you are taking them as intended by your doctor. This is a great opportunity to ask questions to ensure you are getting the desired results.

SinfoniaRX pharmacists also provide Medication Therapy Management, at no cost, to members. They review medications, answer questions, address drug interactions, and may be able to find ways to reduce your prescription drug costs.

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Empowering your journey *continued...*

## EMPOWERING AND SUPPORTING YOU ON YOUR HEALTHCARE JOURNEY



### HEALTH COACHES

Health professionals who offer personalized one-on-one telephone support to help you meet your unique health needs and wellness goals, provide health resources, and reduce risks or complications related to chronic conditions.



### CARE MANAGERS

Registered nurses who provide individual, telephone support by coordinating services among your healthcare providers, comparing the medications that have been prescribed to you with the ones you are taking, and providing education and resources. This program is designed to enhance your health and well-being while supporting your efforts to manage your chronic conditions and safely transition from a hospital or skilled nursing facility to home.



### SOCIAL WORKERS

They bring specialized training and experience to assist individuals and their families or caregivers in addressing and enhancing their well-being. They provide emotional support, coordinate care, and can help connect you with medical and non-medical resources to address unmet needs.



### MEMBER ADVOCATE

Our member advocate is dedicated to helping Aspire Health Plan members find the right care for their needs. If you are having difficulty getting in to see one of your healthcare providers, we can help. Our member advocate will coordinate with internal Aspire Health Plan staff, provider offices, and community resources to help facilitate access to appropriate services, information, and education. By focusing on our member's individual needs, our Member Advocate ensures your voice is heard.



## Test your Medicare knowledge

**Submit your answers for a chance to win a fitness prize pack.** Go to [www.aspirehealthplan.org/knowledge](http://www.aspirehealthplan.org/knowledge) or call **(855) 570-1600** to submit your answers.

1. Enrollment in Medicare Advantage has \_\_\_\_\_ over the past decade
  - a. Tripled
  - b. Doubled
  - c. Stayed the same
2. How many people in the United States are on Medicare?
  - a. 60 million
  - b. 49 million
  - c. 67 million
3. How many people in the United States are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage plan for 2020?
  - a. 24 million
  - b. 10 million
  - c. 20 million
  - d. 22 million
4. All Medicare Advantage plans require referrals.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. How many people in Monterey County are enrolled in Aspire Health Plan?
  - a. 4,500
  - b. 5,800
  - c. 5,500
  - d. 7,000



# Understanding and coping with loneliness and social isolation

Once upon a time, our lives were filled with gatherings and celebrations, eating together and congregating. This time last year, our lives looked a lot different. As of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic still wears on and shelter-in-place and social distancing protocols continue. We know that these protocols are in place to protect us, but we also know that prolonged periods of social isolation can have negative effects on mental and physical health.

## UNDERSTANDING AMBIGUOUS LOSS

Right now, most of us are grieving, but this type of grief is not the same as the loss of a loved one, says *Psychology Today*. This type of grief is daily and persistent — the loss of daily routines, planned celebrations, and physical contact from family and friends. As such, these feelings are hard to understand. Pauline Boss, notable family therapist, first coined the term “ambiguous loss” in the 1970s to refer to a type of loss that is not completely tangible or easily resolute — no closure. Right now, there is no clear “end” to the COVID-19 pandemic. This unknown makes this experience very challenging.

## COPING WITH AMBIGUOUS LOSS

Many of you have attended Zoom gatherings, tried picking up new hobbies, exercised, or gone for walks. But right now, these activities don't feel like they are working. Understand that the distressed feelings you have right now are normal, says *Psychology Today*. By labeling COVID-19 as an

“ambiguous loss” you are able to start the coping process. The ambiguity is the problem; you're not. Feeling grief is not your fault. **So, what can you do?**

- **Share** your experiences with others and listen to theirs, too. An example is “I dislike being stuck at home, but I like knowing that I am safe and healthy.”
- **Think dialectically.** This means holding two opposite ideas in your mind and not “either-or.” An example is “I am alone” and “I have people who love me.”
- **Be resilient.** Find meaning by looking at what is still present. Find your successes and talk to others about their resilience.

Know that your experiences are shared. We are all grieving together, and this is not something you have to just get over. Never hesitate to reach out to us at Aspire — and your doctor — for help.

**You're not alone. We are here for you whenever you need us.**

# Upcoming virtual events



## Community Connections Online classes are open to the public. Share with a friend.

### ATHEROSCLEROSIS



**THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2 p.m.**

When plaque clogs your arteries, it's serious stuff. Join local doctor, Andreas Sakopoulos, MD, for a discussion on why plaque builds in the arteries and how to prevent and treat it before it's too late.

### HEART-HEALTHY BURGERS



**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1-2 p.m.**

There's something new cooking in the Blue Zones kitchen. Join us for a cooking demo, and see how easy it is to serve up a fresh take on healthy.

### SMART GOALS FOR WEIGHT LOSS



**THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 10 a.m.**

SMART goals are easy to use tools that help focus and motivate us. Start the new year off right, with a SMART goal.

### VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB



**THURSDAYS, FEBRUARY 4-MARCH 4, 2-3 p.m.**

Join us for great reads, good company, and the joy of reading.

### EMOTIONAL EATING



**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 10-11 a.m.**

Ever find yourself eating when you aren't hungry? Join us to learn what emotional eating is, how it works, and strategies for dealing with it.

### PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS AND TRICKS



**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2-3 p.m.**

Join local photographer Aggie Pagnillo, as she shares amazing photos from Iceland, and provides practical tips for capturing beautiful photos at home.

RSVP to receive participation details for these FREE online events.

**[www.aspirehealthplan.org/connections2021](http://www.aspirehealthplan.org/connections2021) or (855)570-1600 (TTY users call 711)**

[www.aspirehealthplan.org/members-newsletters](http://www.aspirehealthplan.org/members-newsletters)  
Share your thoughts: [feedback@aspirehealthplan.org](mailto:feedback@aspirehealthplan.org)



Like us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/aspirehealthplan](https://facebook.com/aspirehealthplan)

For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings call (855) 570-1600 (TTY users call 711) Other providers are available in our network. We are open 8 a.m.-8 p.m PT Monday through Friday from April 1 through September 30 and 8 a.m.-8 p.m. seven days a week from October 1 through March 31 (except certain holidays). H8764\_MBR\_Newsletter15\_1220\_C





ASPIRE HEALTH PLAN

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Health and wellness  
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ASPIRE  
ADVOCATE



ASPIRE HEALTH PLAN

in collaboration with



Community Hospital  
of the Monterey Peninsula  
Montage Health



Salinas Valley  
Memorial  
Healthcare System

Grow  
with us

We love referrals. The greatest compliment you can give Aspire is a referral to your friends and family. Thank you for your membership in Aspire Health Plan. Help us grow by sharing Aspire with the people you care about.