



CHOOSE

Because healthy
starts with happy

Happy

“Choose Happy” in 2021 . . . because healthy starts with happy.

All of us want to feel better and improve our overall health. We recently launched the “Choose Happy” program, and we are asking our members, our team, and the greater community to join us.

After a challenging year, it's time to bring happiness and positivity back into our lives in 2021. There is *definitely* a connection between happiness and overall

health. A recent study from the University of Utah looked at the effects of subjective well-being — how people evaluate their own lives — on many facets of physical health. They found that happy people are more likely to take better care of themselves, plus choose healthy behaviors over unhealthy ones. In addition, there is a link between happiness and

continued on the next page

INSIDE



Choose Happy



Emails



Blue Zones Project®



COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs



Telehealth therapy



Member surveys



Aspire Rewards



Upcoming events

Choose Happy continued...

healthy effects on your cardiovascular and immune systems.

HOW DO YOU “CHOOSE HAPPY?”

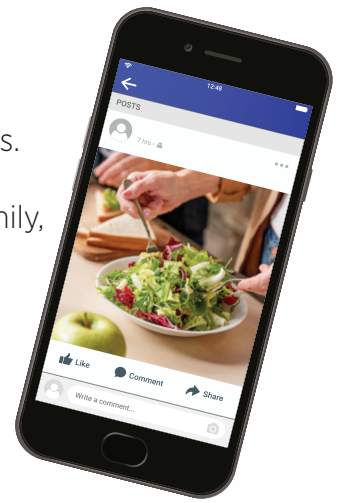
Start by focusing on things that bring you happiness. This can be anything from going outside for a walk to catching up with an old friend or trying something new. If you're goal-oriented — or just want some inspiration — participate in our Choose Happy program. Not to be confused with Aspire Rewards for health screenings; this new program gives you 21 opportunities to focus on happiness in 2021 to earn a Choose Happy journal.

If you missed the mailer we sent last month, find a full list of the 21 opportunities at www.aspirehealthplan.org/choosehappy.

SPREAD THE WORD.

Happiness really is contagious. Share ways you are choosing happy this year with your family, friends, and loved ones. If you are a social media user, share using the hashtag **#AspireChooseHappy**.

We'll be sharing, too. Throughout the year, find activities and content showing how happiness can lead to better overall health (plus ideas to help you earn your journal) at www.aspirehealthplan.org/choosehappy and on our blog and social media pages (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn). Follow along, it's sure to make you feel happy.



Can we email you instead?

We've been told we mail a lot of "stuff." It's true, we do. As a Medicare Advantage plan, there are many things we need to communicate to our members that include our compliance obligations and health and wellness initiatives. When possible, we would like to reduce the amount of these mailings. Of course, we will have to mail some things, but if you have never received an email from us, chances are we don't have your email address. **Please call Member Services at (855) 570-1600 (TTY: 711) and ask our associates to add your email address to your Aspire account.** We'll try to reduce the "stuff" in your mailbox and do our part for the environment.

We are adding a member portal this year. We'll be emailing all our members the registration link to sign up. Our new portal will be a one-stop place for all your health plan information. It's just another great reason to share your email.



Blue Zones Project Monterey County

Blue Zones Project® — committed to making the healthy choice the easy choice — is expanding to a neighborhood near you.

In mid-January, the Blue Zones Project Monterey County and sponsors announced an expansion of the current project in Salinas to include Monterey County and peninsula cities. The community-led improvement initiative started in Salinas more than two years ago and, since, has helped residents there focus on living longer, happier, healthier

lives. The work includes collaboration with local government, civic groups, worksites (Aspire Health Plan is a Blue Zones Project approved worksite), schools, restaurants, and grocery stores.

What does that really mean? Expect lots of walking, healthy eating (including food availability), smoke-free parks, and even a glass of wine at five.

Blue Zones was developed by *National Geographic* Fellow Dan Buettner, who studied areas throughout the world where people live to be 100 or more. Not only did they live longer, they lived longer, disease free lives. His research led to nine tenants (The Power 9®) those places share and which now guide work in communities throughout the country.

- **MOVE NATURALLY** — find ways to be active without really having to think about it
- **PURPOSE** — find something that drives you each day
- **DOWN SHIFT** — look for healthy ways to relieve stress
- **80% RULE** — eat mindfully, and remember to stop when you're 80% full
- **PLANT SLANT** — add plants to your nutrition
- **WINE AT FIVE** — enjoy a glass of wine each day with friends
- **BELONG** — joining a faith-based or community group can add years to your life
- **FAMILY FIRST** — invest in time with your family and live longer
- **RIGHT TRIBE** — find your people, those who support your positive, healthy behaviors

In Salinas, incorporating and practicing those principles has fostered greater well-being for more than 11,000 Blue Zones Project-engaged people and 110 organizations, all taking part in healthy programs. Now, the focus is on incorporating that success more broadly.

“The Blue Zones Project model allows us to collaborate across the Peninsula, and across the entire county, to bring together various sectors — healthcare, the business community, schools, local government, community groups, and individuals — providing us with a road map to promote longevity and wellness — a shared goal we can all embrace,” says Steven Packer, MD, CEO/President Montage Health. “Blue Zones Project allows us to address major health issues that make our community vulnerable to illness, including COVID-19, diabetes, and high blood pressure. This initiative will assist our communities in preventing future illness for years to come.”

Aspire is proud to announce that we are designated a Blue Zones Project approved worksite.

That means we have made the commitment to improving and sustaining employee well-being. Over the past year, we developed a program to shape our workplace environment to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Here are just a few of the changes we made at our worksite: improving our physical environment to encourage standing vs. sitting, creating policies requiring healthy snack choices, encouraging community involvement and volunteerism, offering weight-management and nutritional coaching, outreach to local restaurants to encourage healthy options on menus, and much more. We are excited to help spread the word about Blue Zones.



So, stay tuned, as they say, for upcoming announcements in a neighborhood near you. Take the #LIVELONGERBETTER pledge at montereycounty.bluezonesproject.com/pledge

COVID-19 Vaccine FAQs

As of this writing, vaccines in Monterey County have begun for the 65+ community. By the time you read this, you may have already received one, or both, of your vaccines. Whether you are weighing the decision to get vaccinated, or have been vaccinated already, we have the answers to some frequently asked questions (FAQs).



If I've already had COVID-19, do I need a vaccine?

Yes. Due to the severe health risks associated with COVID-19 and because reinfection is possible, people who have been sick with COVID-19 should be vaccinated.

What can I expect after receiving the first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine?

People have reported side effects from the vaccines, including pain where the vaccine was injected, body aches, headaches, or fever, lasting for a day or two. Good news — the vast majority of side effects are mild and very short-term.

After either dose, if you have pain or discomfort, talk to your doctor about taking an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in most cases, discomfort from fever or pain is normal. However, you should contact your doctor or healthcare provider if redness or tenderness where you got the shot increases after 24 hours or if your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

On the arm where you got the shot:

- Pain
- Swelling

Throughout the rest of your body:

- Fever
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Headache

Do I still need to wear my mask and take precautions after getting the COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, you should still wear a mask, practice social distancing,

and practice other infection-prevention precautions. It's not yet known whether people vaccinated for COVID-19 can still carry and transmit the virus, even when they themselves don't get sick.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?

There is a common myth that researchers rushed development of the COVID-19 vaccine. In reality, the mRNA technology behind the new coronavirus vaccines has been in development for almost two decades. Vaccine developers didn't skip any testing steps, but conducted some of the steps on an overlapping schedule to gather data faster. Because COVID-19 is so contagious and widespread, it did not take long to see whether the vaccine worked for the study volunteers who were vaccinated.

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

Both the Moderna and Pfizer authorized vaccines instruct your cells to reproduce a protein that is part of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, which helps your body recognize and fight the virus if it comes along. The COVID-19 vaccine does not contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus, so you cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine. The protein that helps your immune system recognize and fight the virus does not cause infection of any sort. In addition, the mRNA does its job to cause the cell to make protein to stimulate the immune system, and then it quickly breaks down — without affecting your DNA.

The Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses a harmless cold virus to deliver instructions to cells for making the spike protein used by the COVID-19 to get inside cells. The immune system then responds to the spike protein, recognizing it as foreign and triggering the development of antibodies.

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COVID-19 vaccine FAQs *continued...*

HOW DO I FIND A VACCINATION CLINIC?

Supply remains very limited. Vaccination clinic slots are offered by multiple providers on a first-come, first-served basis.

You can monitor many local vaccination clinic locations by visiting the Monterey County COVID-19 vaccination registration page:

www.mcvaccinate.com

Or, Montage Health's vaccine information page: **www.chomp.org/vaccine**

Or, Aspire Health Plan's COVID-19 information page:

www.aspirehealthplan.org/covid

Slots fill quickly, so check back often.



INTRODUCING

Therapy and/or psychiatry from the comfort of your home

This spring, Aspire Health Plan is adding an innovative therapy solution for our members — access to behavioral health providers from the comfort of your home.

There are many reasons you may choose to access therapy or psychiatry services via video and/or phone (telehealth) visits. Telehealth visits are easy to use, and for Aspire Health Plan members, there is no co-payment.

Telehealth visits mean no waiting in waiting rooms, no fighting traffic to get to your appointment on time, and no jockeying for a parking space. Studies have shown that some patients even find it easier to “open up” to their therapist via phone or video. In addition, when you see your doctor as needed, you can better manage your medication, your feelings, and your overall health.

For more information, call Member Services toll free (855) 570-1600 (TTY 711). We are open 8 a.m.–8 p.m. PT, Monday through Friday.

Here are just a few more reasons to choose telehealth:

- It's convenient. Clinicians can often accommodate next-day appointments, and are available evenings and weekends
- It's safe and secure, using HIPAA-compliant technology to protect your personal information
- It's easy — you can access the visit on any computer, tablet, or smartphone with internet and a webcam
- You'll have support 24/7 if a crisis arrives

The addition of remote behavioral health providers will supplement the providers already participating in our provider network.



Member Experience surveys coming soon



**Have you had a flu shot?
On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your
overall healthcare? Your personal doctor?**

These are just two of the questions included in federally mandated surveys used to gather feedback to help better understand consumer healthcare experiences and outcomes.

Each year, these surveys are mailed to randomly selected Aspire Health Plan members. These surveys are called the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems survey (CAHPS) and the Health Outcomes Survey (HOS), conducted by our partner, SPH Analytics. Participation is voluntary, but we urge you to respond to the survey when you receive it.

If you have any unresolved problem or want to share a positive or negative experience, we want to hear from you. Please contact Member Services, toll free, at (855) 570-1600.

Health plans are given star ratings based on a number of performance measures, including member survey responses. You can help just by completing the anonymous survey sent to you and giving us your honest feedback. It helps Aspire know how we are doing at helping members get the care they need.

Past member feedback has prompted us to make important decisions such as offering online payment tools, transportation benefits, and changes to prescription drug coverage. Hearing your feedback, both positive and negative, helps us stay connected to what matters most to you. If you receive a survey, please answer and return it. Your voice makes a difference.

2021 Aspire Rewards

We are excited to announce the 2021 launch of Aspire Rewards, a program where you can earn rewards for taking care of your health. Here's how it works: When you complete your recommended healthcare activities, let us know, and we'll send you a reward. It's that easy.

Recommended healthcare activities differ based on individual needs, but include screenings such as:

- Annual wellness visit or Health at Home visit
- Breast cancer screening
- Diabetes eye exam



Watch for your mailer, and call Member Services if you don't receive it by April 30.

Upcoming virtual events



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

HOW TO GROW A GREAT TOMATO



MONDAY, APRIL 26, 2 p.m.

Learn all you need to know about growing a great tomato, and plenty of other gardening tips. Presented by Monterey County master gardener Carole King.



Join us for a series of presentations as part of our Choose Happy program — because happy starts with healthy.

For more information visit
www.aspirehealth.org/choosehappy

WHOLE PERSON WELLNESS PART I



THURSDAY, APRIL 29, 2 p.m.

Draft your personal road map toward optimal wellness. In this session we will dive into the visioning, planning, and preparation that is essential for sustaining motivation to reach and maintain your long-term health goals.

WHOLE PERSON WELLNESS PART II



THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2 p.m.

Renew your perspective on how to nourish your body and mind to support whole-person wellness. Together, we'll take a closer look at how the way we eat, move our body, and connect to the world around us can influence our health and longevity.

RSVP to receive participation details for these FREE online events.
www.aspirehealthplan.org/connections2021 or (855) 570-1600 (TTY 711)

www.aspirehealthplan.org/members-newsletters
Share your thoughts: feedback@aspirehealthplan.org



Like us on Facebook:
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_Newsletter16_321_C



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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.