



# LONG-TERM CARE CONNECTION

Spring/Summer 2025

## How to get through allergy season with asthma

Allergy season can be tough for people with asthma. Use these tips to breathe easier.

During allergy season, pollen, grass and ragweed fill the air. If you're allergic to these substances, they can cause itching, sneezing and a stuffy nose. And if you have asthma, your airways are more sensitive to them. They can make your asthma flare up, adding coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath to your list of symptoms.

Here are some tips to help manage asthma during spring allergy season.

### ① Know your triggers

Pay attention when your allergy symptoms flare up. What's around you — trees, grass, flowers? This helps you pinpoint exactly what you're allergic to. Then, you can figure out ways to avoid your triggers. You can also ask your doctor about allergy testing.

### ② Watch pollen counts

Check weather websites for local pollen counts and air quality. On days when allergens are high, try to stay inside. And keep windows closed to prevent pollen from coming in. If you need to go outside, wear a mask. It can help keep pollen out of your mouth and nose.



### ③ Clear away triggers

Pollen can stick to your clothes and hair. Change clothes when you get home and take a shower to wash off any pollen. Washing your sheets weekly helps keep your sleeping area allergen-free, too.

### ④ Use the right medicines

Always take your asthma meds as directed by your provider. If you use a rescue inhaler, have it nearby in case of an asthma attack. Adding over-the-counter allergy medicines to your routine can help prevent allergy symptoms. Ask your provider for their recommendations, and be sure to follow their directions carefully. You usually have to take allergy meds daily, even if you're feeling fine. Sometimes you need to start taking them before allergy season peaks.

Always check with your doctor for more tips for managing your symptoms safely. You can beat the pollen blues and enjoy the spring weather.

## Get help with housing

Starting October 1, 2024, AHCCCS members can get help with housing services through the Housing & Health Opportunities (H2O) program. A member may be eligible if they are experiencing homelessness or are at-risk of experiencing homelessness. H2O services can help:

- Members with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) designation who are experiencing homelessness and also have a chronic health condition.
- Members who are in a correctional facility or were released within 90 days. This may include members with SMI who are in a correctional facility or were released within 90 days.

Ask your assigned health home for help connecting with housing services and coordinating care with our network of providers.

Want more info? **Read about the AHCCCS Housing & Health Opportunities (H2O) Demonstration.**

### Links to H2O partners:

AHCCCS: [azahcccs.gov/Resources/Federal/HousingWaiverRequest.html](https://azahcccs.gov/Resources/Federal/HousingWaiverRequest.html)

Solari: Visit [community.solari-inc.org/h2o](https://community.solari-inc.org/h2o) or call 1-480-546-7135

Arizona Behavioral Health Corporation: [azabc.org/](https://azabc.org/)





## Medicare Part D

# Learn about prescription drug benefits for dual-eligible members

People who are eligible and enrolled in both Medicaid and Medicare are considered “dual-eligible” members. Once you are Medicare eligible, your Medicaid plan can no longer pay for your drugs. Dual-eligible people need to enroll in a Medicare plan that includes Part D drug coverage.

Medicare Advantage plans include coverage for Medicare-covered services, Part D prescription drugs and other benefits not covered by Medicare.

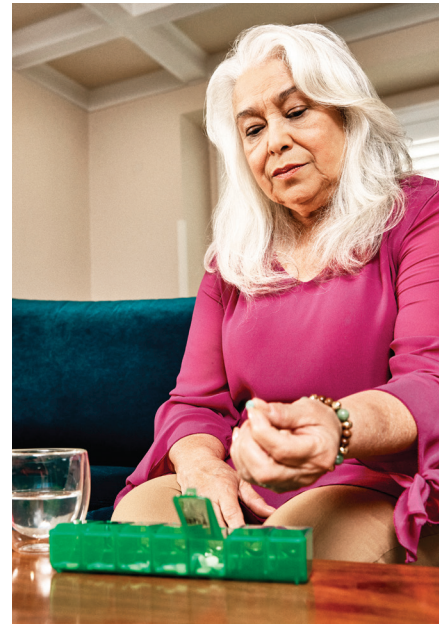
Some Medicare Advantage plans are special needs plans (SNPs). These plans include coverage for Medicare-covered services, Part D prescription drugs and additional benefits. And they will coordinate with the Medicaid plan coverage a dual eligible member has.

Mercy Care offers a Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plan (D-SNP) called Mercy Care Advantage. It includes Part D drug coverage. If you qualify for the ALTCS E-PD Medicaid program, live in a long-term care facility (like a nursing home) or get home- and community-based services, you pay \$0 for covered drugs. With

Part D coverage, you will pay a small amount for covered drugs.

If you don't join a Medicare plan that includes Part D drug coverage, Medicare will automatically enroll you in a stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plan. People who are dual eligible can switch Medicare plans during certain times of the year.

*Note: AHCCCS does not contract nor oversee the activities of any separate stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plans.*



## Understand your pharmacy benefits

Mercy Care's List of Covered Drugs (also called the drug list or formulary) tells you which prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs and items are covered at participating network pharmacies.

The drug list will tell you if there are any special rules or restrictions on any covered drugs. In these cases, you or your provider or other prescriber must ask the plan to cover a drug by submitting required medical information.

Visit **[MercyCareAZ.org/ltc/pharmacy.html](https://www.mercycareaz.org/ltc/pharmacy.html)** to find out about our pharmacy management and updates. You can see which drugs are covered and any requirements for getting them. You can also see what your provider needs to do if you want a medication that isn't covered.

**Need to renew your coverage?** You must renew your Medicaid coverage every year. Look for your renewal notice in the mail. Go to **[healthearizonaplus.gov](https://www.healthearizonaplus.gov)** to learn more.



## Help for easing aches and pains

From headaches to sore feet, body aches and pains are an annoying part of life. Some are normal and easy to pinpoint, like soreness from exercising. Other pains, especially chronic pain, can be our body's way of alerting us to a larger problem. Here are a few ways to get some relief from aches and pains.

### Exercise regularly

Only half of Americans get enough physical activity, but there are many good reasons to exercise regularly. Exercise helps you think and feel better. It can help control weight and reduce the risk of conditions such as high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.

Plus, regular exercise can help manage pain by:

- Keeping bones, joints and muscles strong
- Helping keep off extra weight that can strain the body
- Helping ease symptoms of chronic illnesses like diabetes and arthritis

Most people aged 18 and over should get at least 30 minutes of aerobic exercise five days a week, plus two sessions of strength training a week, along with performing flexibility exercises during each workout.

### Eat healthy foods

Too much sugar, salt and/or fat can lead to upset stomach, aches and sweating. Eating healthy can help reduce aches, pains and inflammation (swelling).

Aim to eat a diet that's rich in:

- Fruits and veggies
- Low-fat protein
- Whole grains
- Small amounts of healthy fats like nuts and avocados

Use your plate to portion foods:

- Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies
- Fill one quarter of your plate with whole grains
- Fill one quarter of your plate with low-fat protein

Visit **www.MyPlate.gov** for more healthy-eating tips.

## Get a body tune-up

Temporary treatments like chiropractic care or physical therapy can help ease chronic pain.

Chiropractic care can help manage pain due to injury or conditions like migraines, sciatica or arthritis. Your Primary Care

Provider (PCP) may order up to 20 visits each health-plan year (Oct. 1-Sept. 30). Your PCP may request authorization for additional chiropractic services if they are medically necessary.

Your PCP will typically recommend physical therapy after certain injuries, especially ones affecting joints, muscles and/or mobility. Physical therapy is covered for members, with



## Integrated care: What to know

Integrated care means that a member needs only one health plan to get care for their body and mind. Mercy Care members can get their physical and behavioral health services from us.

We offer integrated health services to all our members:

- Long-term care (LTC) members
- ACC-RBHA members (including members with a Serious Mental Illness, or SMI, designation)
- Members with a developmental disability
- Mercy Care Department of Child Safety Comprehensive Health Plan (Mercy Care DCS CHP) members

We also provide integrated services for Arizonans who are dually eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare with Mercy Care Advantage (D-SNP members).

We are committed to providing our members with more options to get physical and behavioral health care and wellness services. We simplify access to care for members with complex care needs. If you have any questions or need services, you can call Member Services.

a limit of up to 30 visits per contract year.

\*For DD members, habilitative physical therapy is provided by DDD for members under the age of 21.

## Have your feet checked

Don't ignore chronic foot pain or injuries to your feet, especially cuts, rashes or bumps that won't heal. You may need to see a podiatrist who specializes in foot problems for issues like bunions, hammertoe, plantar fasciitis or diabetic neuropathy. Podiatry services (foot and ankle services) are a covered service for members.

Relief is here for your aches and pains! If you are bothered by chronic pain, let your PCP know so they can help find the cause and treat it. If you are injured or have intense, unbearable pain, go to the emergency room.

## Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/physical-activity-basics/benefits/>

<https://www.eatright.org/health/health-conditions/arthritis-and-inflammation/can-diet-help-with-inflammation>

<https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/what-is-myplate>

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2023/03/focus-your-feet>

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/communication-resources/diabetes-foot-problems-when-to-see-your-doctor.html>



# Peer and family supports can lend a helping hand

Trained peer support specialists assist members with their mental health recovery. These are mentors who can relate to your loved one. The peer support specialist can help families and their loved one address the member's social needs.

Peer support provides:

- Resources to connect with the community
- Tools to use in times of crisis
- Help with treatment and wellness plans
- An advocate who will work with their clinical team

There are also family support specialists that educate and guide members and their families through the behavioral health system. A family support specialist is an advocate. They help give a voice to the members and their family of choice, and a chance for members to explain their unique family situation. Also, they can connect members and their family with other Mercy Care community partners that provide services such as employment and housing support for members. These community partners are part of the treatment team that works with members and their families. **View the list of peer and family support providers.**

Peers and families play an important role in helping members be as healthy as possible. That is



why Mercy Care works with the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition, an organization of peer and family member advocates. The coalition makes sure individuals and families have a say in the behavioral health policy decisions that affect their community.

Want to learn more about how to get involved? Or about peer and family support resources? Contact the Peer and Family Referral Center at [referralhelp.org](https://referralhelp.org) or email the Office of Individual and Family Affairs at [OIFATeam@mercycares.org](mailto:OIFATeam@mercycares.org).

# Get help quitting tobacco

Do you use tobacco products such as cigarettes or chewing tobacco? Or vapes? Quitting tobacco products and vapes is one of the best things that you can do for your health.

With help, you can double your chances of quitting successfully. You can get help or coaching through group education, over the phone and through text messaging. You can also get medication from your doctor. You can get all this at no cost to you.

Your doctor can also refer you to the Arizona Smokers Helpline (ASHLine). They provide coaching and resources to help quit tobacco products and vapes. They can also provide information to help protect you and your loved ones from secondhand smoke. You don't need a referral to the ASHLine.

Looking for more information to help you or someone you know quit?

- Talk to your care manager, if you are part of Mercy Care's Care Management program.
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider.
- Call the Arizona Smokers Helpline (ASHLine) directly at **1-800-556-6222** or visit **ashline.org**.

There are other resources available for you to quit tobacco and vapes. The **Tobacco Free Arizona** program helps Arizonans understand the risks of tobacco use and vaping and offers resources for quitting.



## HIV and pregnancy: Why testing matters

Pregnant or thinking about having a baby? Be sure to get tested for HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is the virus that causes AIDS.

When you're pregnant, you can pass the virus on to your child during pregnancy or delivery. But if you know you are infected, you can take steps to keep your baby (and you) healthy.

Special medicines can help prevent passing the virus to the baby. These medicines work best when started early. But they can still help if used before labor begins.

HIV testing is encouraged for all pregnant people, even if you don't think you have HIV. HIV may not have any symptoms for years. So you could have it without knowing it.

Your Primary Care Provider (PCP) can test for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). If the test is positive for any STI, your PCP can prescribe medication and help you find counseling. Testing, medication and counseling are provided at no cost to members.



## Community resources

Help from caring people in your community and special programs are available to you. Here are some health and wellness resources you can reach out to for support:

### 2-1-1 Arizona

You can find information about employment and family services, food, clothing and shelter, and how to get help if you're experiencing domestic violence.

Go to **211arizona.org** or call **211**.

### Substance abuse and mental health

You can locate sites for mental health and substance use treatment.

Go to **findtreatment.samhsa.gov** or call **1-877-726-4727**.

### Health-e-Arizona

You can renew your AHCCCS benefits, check coverage and update your information.

Go to **healthearizonaplus.gov**

### ARIZONA@WORK

You can get help finding a job.

Go to **arizonaatwork.com**.

More resources are available at **mercy careaz.org/community-resource-guide**.

## Help for a behavioral health crisis

Mercy Care members can call the **Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **1-844-534-HOPE (4673)** or text HOPE to **4HOPE (44673)**. Chat support is available at **crisis.solari-inc.org/start-a-chat**.

The Crisis Line staff can help:

- Provide crisis support over the phone
- Dispatch a crisis mobile team to support you in the community
- Arrange transportation to take you somewhere safe
- Help you arrange counseling or a connection to your outpatient provider
- Provide options for dealing with urgent situations
- If you feel unsafe at home

### Tribal crisis lines:

- San Carlos Apache Reservation: **1-866-495-6735**
- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: **1-800-259-3449**
- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: **1-855-331-6432**
- Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: **1-480-461-8888**
- San Lucy District of the Tohono O'odham Nation: **1-480-461-8888**
- Tohono O'odham Nation: **1-844-423-8759**
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe: Tucson **1-520-591-7206**; Guadalupe **1-480-736-4943**
- White Mountain Apache Tribe: **1-928-338-4811**
- Navajo Nation: **1-928-551-0508**

**Veterans Crisis Line:** 988, press 1

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** 988

**National crisis text line:** Text HOME to **741741**  
Chat support is available at **crisistextline.org/text-us**.

**Teen Lifeline:** Call or text **1-602-248-TEEN (8336)**

If you need someone to talk to, call the Warm Line at **1-602-347-1100**. Get 24/7 support from trained Peer Support Specialists.

*Always call **911** in life-threatening situations.*





# Take advantage of your Member Handbook

Your Mercy Care Member Handbook has everything you need to know about your health plan, including:

- Benefit restrictions outside Mercy Care's service area
- Copayments and other charges you may be responsible for
- How to file a complaint, grievance or appeal
- How we make decisions about your care (called Utilization Management)
- How we evaluate new technology as a covered benefit
- Notice of privacy practices
- Your member rights and responsibilities

The Member Handbook is updated every year. If there are major changes, we will send you a letter about it at least 30 days before the changes are effective.

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You can **view your Member Handbook online**. Prefer a hard copy? Call Member Services to have one mailed to you. Let us know if you need it in another language, a larger font or other formats.

**LTC Connection** is published for the members of Mercy Care.

4750 S. 44th Place, Suite 150,  
Phoenix, AZ 85040.

This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

Call Mercy Care Member Services Monday through Friday, 7 AM to 6 PM, at **1-602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**).

Or call the 24-hour nurse line: **1-602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879**.

**MercyCareAZ.org**

## Nondiscrimination Notice

Mercy Care complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. Mercy Care does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, health status or need for health care services.

### Mercy Care:

- Provides no-cost aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
  - Qualified sign language interpreters
  - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides no-cost language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
  - Qualified interpreters
  - Information written in other languages

If you need a qualified interpreter, written information in other formats, translation or other services, call the number on your ID card or **1-800-385-4104 (TTY:711)**.

If you believe that Mercy Care has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex, you can file a grievance with our Civil Rights Coordinator at:

Address:	Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator 4750 S. 44th Place, Ste. 150 Phoenix, AZ 85040
Telephone:	<b>1-888-234-7358 (TTY 711)</b>
Email:	MedicaidCRCoordinator@MercyCareAZ.org

You can file a grievance in person or by mail or email. If you need help filing a grievance, our Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 1-800-537-7697 (TDD).

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

This notice is available on the Mercy Care website at

<https://www.mercycareaz.org/content/dam/mercycare/pdf/MercyCare-1557-Notice-16Tags-020421-ua1.pdf>.

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