your best bet: exercise

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a helping hand with finances

If you need help from time to time to pay for your medical services, you may be eligible for Kaiser Permanente’s Medical Financial Assistance (MFA) Program or the Discount Payment Program.

The MFA Program helps members who are having difficulty paying for the care they receive. There are several requirements to qualify for the MFA Program, including having a household income that is at or below 350% of the federal poverty guideline. For members above 350%, but below 400%, you may be eligible for the Discount Payment Program, which provides a reduction to the amount you need to pay.

To find out more about our MFA or Discount Payment Programs, call 1-866-399-7696 or visit kp.org/mfa.

help in your language

Interpreter services are available in your language, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at no cost to you. For details, see pages 12 to 14 of the enclosed Guidebook, or call our Member Service Call Center at 1-800-464-4000 (English), 1-800-788-0616 (Spanish), 1-800-757-7585 (Chinese dialects), or 1-800-777-1370 (TTY for the hearing/speech impaired).

ayuda en su idioma

Disponemos de servicios de interpretación gratuitos en su idioma las 24 horas del día, los 7 días de la semana. Para detalles al respecto, consulte las páginas 12 a 14 de la Guía adjunta, o llame a nuestro Centro de Llamadas para Servicios a los Miembros al 1-800-788-0616 o al 1-800-777-1370 (TTY para personas con problemas auditivos/del habla).

your health, connected

My Health Manager puts you in charge of your health.

Member Yvelyse Santiago’s computer is like a window into her health. That’s because she can use it to connect with her health information whenever she wants. With My Health Manager on kp.org, Santiago can refill most of her prescriptions, check recent lab results, and e-mail her doctor’s office from the convenience of her computer. She can also make routine appointments or check the details and instructions from previous visits.

“It helps remind me of what I need to do to keep myself healthy,” says Santiago. She also adds that using My Health Manager is more convenient for her because she can do things such as send an e-mail to her doctor with routine questions any time, day or night.

Santiago says her favorite tool is the one that allows her to check her recent lab results and then links her to the online health encyclopedia to learn more about what the results mean.

“I think it’s just great that Kaiser Permanente is thinking of us, the patients, when they develop all these new technologies.”

think outside the box

What would you do with four more hours a day? Visit kp.org/tvturnoff to learn about how limiting screen time can benefit your whole family.

your deductible plan in action

If you have one of our deductible plans, what you pay for care at the time of service is different than what you pay if you have our traditional plan. For most services, you have a deductible—a fixed amount you must pay in a calendar year before we will pay for certain services.

To help you plan each visit, we suggest you view our sample fee list for an estimate of how much you may pay for a particular service you’re scheduled to receive. Go to kp.org/treatmentestimates to view the list. If you have questions about your deductible plan, call our Deductible Products Service Team at 1-800-390-3507, weekdays from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Are you a male Kaiser Permanente member, aged 55 years or older, with mild to moderate difficulty starting and/or maintaining urine flow, and have not yet begun any treatment for this problem?

If so, you may qualify as a candidate for a Santa Clara study where men are taught an easy, painless, self-administered maneuver that may be useful in overcoming these difficulties. For information, call our Urology Department at (408) 851-4515 to arrange for a discussion of participation in the study with Dr. Mehdi Kamarei.

Construction of our new Pinole Medical Offices continues as workers start focusing on the mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems of the building and start installing the interior walls this summer.

The medical offices at 1301 Pinole Valley Road are scheduled to open this winter, providing a variety of primary care services such as adult medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics/gynecology. It’ll also have radiology services and pharmacy, laboratory, and health education departments. The Pinole Medical Offices complement the care provided by our Richmond Medical Center. As some primary care physicians are relocated from Richmond to Pinole, there will be more room for specialty physicians in Richmond. You’ll now have convenient and quality care in both Richmond and Pinole.

NEW GIFT SHOP coming soon to Oakland

You may have noticed workers busy on a project on the 1st Floor of our Oakland Medical Center hospital. They’re constructing a new gift shop, which will offer many great gift options when it opens this fall. Thank you for your patience during construction.

“We view members and visitors as our guests,” says Kimberly Graves, service director. “The Service Advisor program will improve the already outstanding care our members receive. “Our commitment to high-quality service is at the core of everything we do,” Graves says.

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IN TRANSITION
Understanding the natural phase of menopause.

Menopause is a natural part of a woman’s life. It’s the point in your life when you haven’t experienced a menstrual period for more than a year. If you understand what occurs during menopause, you’ll be more prepared to make healthy choices for this next chapter of life.

“Every woman experiences menopause differently,” says Christine Shaheen, senior health educator in Fremont, Hayward, and Union City. “Some women dread it while others approach it with a sense of freedom.”

For most women, menopause occurs in their 50s. Some may experience menopause-related symptoms (such as hot flashes, mood changes, and night sweats) in their 40s during perimenopause, a time when hormones start fluctuating.

Dr. Jha—who teaches a class in Fremont called Menopause: Hot Flashes, Hormones, and Health—says that there are more treatment options available today, such as hormone replacements.

Medical treatment may benefit some women, and lifestyle choices such as healthy eating and physical activity are recommended for all. “A healthy way to embrace menopause,” Shaheen says, “is to understand it, know how to plan for it, and know how to care for yourself on this journey.”

To find out more about menopause classes and any related fees, call (510) 784-4531 in Hayward, (510) 248-3455 in Fremont, (510) 752-6150 in Oakland, and (510) 307-1588 in Richmond.

“Every woman experiences menopause differently.”

Kids who start reading at an early age can do better in school—and in life. So we’d like to help foster a love of reading by giving out free books during well-child visits.

This is part of the national Reach Out and Read program, which promotes early literacy by partnering with pediatrics departments across the country. Both our Richmond and Hayward Medical Centers have been participating for several years. Our Oakland Medical Center started taking part in Reach Out and Read a few months ago, and Fremont participates as well.

“The purpose is to encourage parents to read to their children,” says Gina Gallitero, senior health educator at Oakland. She says each child’s pediatrician gives his or her patient an age-appropriate book during seven well-child visits at Kaiser Permanente. (Your child will have nine well-child visits between the ages of 6 months and 5 years.)

Rebecca Gentemann, MD, a pediatrician and the physician lead for the Reach Out and Read program in Oakland, says even if a child is too young to read, reading to your kids is a good way to build an early appreciation for books. “We start out with board books for the 6-month-olds, and they usually just chew on the books. But they’re able to learn what a book is and how to turn the pages.”

Dr. Gentemann says an added bonus is the parent-child interaction that comes with reading together. “Parental involvement is crucial to the program,” she says. “Whether it’s for 5 or 15 minutes, reading to your child is a time to sit there and cuddle with your child in your lap and flip through the pages.”

As the program develops in Oakland, our Pediatrics Department will also stock books for kids to read in the waiting room. Gallitero says there will eventually be volunteers in the waiting area who will read to the kids.

For more about the Reach Out and Read program, go to reachoutandread.org.

Learn more by reading Menopause, A Kaiser Permanente Guidebook for Women, which is available in English and Spanish at your local Health Education Department. Or go to kp.org/health and search for “menopause,” which will lead you to articles in our health encyclopedia.
YOUR BEST BET: EXERCISE

“IF THERE WAS ONE SINGLE THING YOU COULD DO to dramatically improve your health, there is no doubt that it would be exercise,” says Robert Sallis, MD, president of the American College of Sports Medicine and a family and sports medicine physician at our Rancho Cucamonga Medical Offices. “Regular physical activity, at the correct intensity, is so powerful in maintaining and improving health that it should be prescribed, just as a medicine or drug would be.”

The Fountain of Youth

Exercise is vital to your health. After age 25, you lose a quarter to half a pound of muscle mass every year. This loss of muscle decreases your metabolism (the rate at which you burn calories) which means you can’t eat as much as you used to without gaining weight.

But exercise is about more than just weight control. Studies show that regular physical activity, even just walking briskly 30 minutes a day, can:

- Reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease by one-third.
- Reduce mortality and the risk of recurrent breast cancer by almost 50%.
- Lower your risk of colon cancer by over 60%.
- Decrease depression as effectively as Prozac or behavioral therapy.
- Reduce your risk of heart disease by 40%.
- Reduce your incidence of diabetes and high blood pressure by almost 50%.
- Help kids perform better on standardized academic achievement tests.

Fitting Fitness In

“We were born to move. Just look at kids spontaneously running around. Yet, as a whole, we’re becoming less fit,” says Kirk Pappas, MD, a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician at our Santa Rosa Medical Center. “Schools have fewer physical education programs despite evidence that physical education improves academic performance. And we’re eating more convenience foods instead of fresh foods. We don’t make enough time in our day to get some exercise.”

Now that research has proven that being fit goes far beyond giving us an attractive body and healthier heart, the question is not whether we should exercise, but when? Some days, finding the time to brush your teeth may be a challenge, let alone carving out time in your schedule for exercise.

You should aim to get 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity daily. This time can be broken down into 10-minute intervals throughout the day. Consider getting up earlier to fit in a workout. Or do a cardio or weight routine while you watch TV.

Mini-Fitness Moments

Throughout the day, sneak in cardio, strength training, and flexibility-enhancing stretches.

- Take stretch breaks, especially if you sit at a desk all day. Yoga moves are great for strengthening your core muscles; consider taking a class at your local Kaiser Permanente facility to learn some poses.
- Hit the floor and do a set of crunches or push-ups. Whether you’re at home or at the office, you can get your heart pumping quickly.

Nothing motivates like a partner, and now you can access the next best thing to a jogging buddy: our online Health Coach tool featuring behavioral psychologist Sheri Pruitt, PhD, from our Sacramento Medical Center.

Through short videos and interactive questions, you can design a custom plan for changing activity levels and improving eating habits.

“Rather than critiquing your performance or eating habits, the modules help you remember your goals and stay on track, and offer great ideas based on your specific needs,” says Kim Smith, MPH, in Regional Health Education.

To access the Health Coach tool, visit your physician’s home page at kp.org/mydoctor and look for the link on the left-hand side. You need to be registered on our Web site to use these secure features. If you’re not already registered, go to kp.org/register to get access today.

continued on page 10
“Not tonight dear, I have a headache.” It’s not a punch line; it’s a reality! I got caught in traffic, forgot my lunch, and did an unscheduled emergency surgery in the middle of an already busy schedule. And now I’ve got a major headache.

Unfortunately, headaches are a common ailment. Studies show that one person in every four households suffers from migraines. And women are three times more likely than men to suffer from headaches.

While 80% of headaches are tension headaches, there is a range of headache types, with different levels of pain and symptoms. There are also lots of headache triggers: stress, hormones, weather, exhaustion, medicines, and foods. Identifying and avoiding triggers can help prevent headaches.

I wanted to learn more about my headache so I went to my physician home page at kp.org/mydoctor/ tflanagan and clicked on the “Managing Your Headaches” link in the left bar.

I downloaded a headache diary to help me understand my personal triggers and discovered that most of my headaches are probably caused by too much computer use. Next, I used the action planning tool to identify what I could do to help manage my headaches. One item on my plan was to check out the online SmartMoves ergonomics program found in the Healthy Living Online Programs link on the physician home pages. I now know to stretch my neck often when I spend time at my computer. I also plan to keep ibuprofen around in case I get a headache.

Chances are you or someone in your family has headaches. Visit “Managing Your Headaches” to learn more about self-care and prevention. Then maybe you’ll be saying, “Tonight’s the night, dear!” Oh, by the way, this online program is useful for men, too!

▶ Visit your doctor’s home page at kp.org/mydoctor and look for the “Managing Your Headaches” link on the left side.

As a regular columnist, Tracy Flanagan, MD, Kaiser Permanente’s women’s health leader in Northern California, offers expert advice and information on health issues facing women today.

**correction** In our spring Partners in Health column “Ready or not, here comes baby,” we provided an incorrect amount of folic acid to take daily. It should be 400 micrograms.
Anxiety, back pain, depression, diabetes, insomnia, and obesity. If you could take one pill three days a week that would help prevent these conditions and more, would you? What if that prescription was for exercise?

It’s a fact: Regular physical activity improves general health, reduces your risk of chronic disease, and is a foundation for well-being.

In addition to regular exercise options, consider trying an alternative movement program like yoga or tai chi.

Yoga can produce a deep sense of relaxation while also developing endurance. Yoga poses improve flexibility and strength and can become a vigorous workout without overexertion.

Tai chi is a system of movements rooted in Chinese martial arts. Like yoga, tai chi enhances mental and physical health through graceful slow motions and breath control. And tai chi can help reduce falls and improve balance in the elderly.

The key to success is to regularly do something physical that you enjoy. Find a movement class that’s right for you. Call Health Education for information and fees, or go to kp.org/classes.

As a regular columnist, Harley Goldberg, DO, director of our Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Program in Northern California, shares information about herbs, supplements, mind-body medicine, and other alternative therapies. If you have specific questions about your care, please ask your physician.