

Healthy CONNECTIONS



Straight Talk From Your Health & Welfare Fund

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Alaska Electrical Health & Welfare Fund

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What's More Important Than Ever This Year?

Flu Shots Help Keep Everyone Healthy

Every year, millions of Americans get the seasonal flu. Most suffer from mild symptoms and recover in a week or so. But tens of thousands get so sick they require hospitalization—and many of those may die.

This year's flu season—on top of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—could strain the health care system with

increased doctor visits and hospitalizations. And if it's a bad flu season, that could negatively impact millions of Americans. But everyone can make a positive difference, simply by getting a flu shot.

49%

of Americans got a FLU SHOT in 2019

Source: Centers for Disease Control

How a Flu Shot Helps You and Others

1 The seasonal flu vaccine is safe and effective. It reduces your risk of getting the flu by about 60%. And, if you get the flu anyway, it will reduce the severity of your symptoms and how long you're sick.

2 People could get both the flu and COVID-19 at once. Both are respiratory illnesses that attack the lungs. It's feared that compounding lung damage from both diseases could significantly increase the risk of having serious, life-threatening symptoms.

3 If you don't get the flu, you won't spread flu germs. The flu hits children hard, as well as the elderly and those with underlying conditions. By staying healthy, you help protect others from getting the flu, which also weakens their immune system's ability to fight other illnesses.

Three Tips for Getting Vaccinated Safely

If you didn't get a flu shot through the Coalition, your Health Plan also covers seasonal flu vaccines at 100%. You can get a flu shot at your doctor's office, or at one of the Health Plan's Wellness and Minor Care Plan clinics, a Coalition Health Center, or a CVS network pharmacy.

1 Don't wait. The flu vaccine takes a few weeks to provide immunity. Flu season has already begun and peaks from December through February. The sooner you get vaccinated, the sooner you'll be protected.

2 Plan ahead. Avoid crowds and long wait times by making an appointment when possible.

3 Be well. If you've been sick, wait until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours before getting a flu shot. Ask your provider if you should reschedule if you have other symptoms (stuffy or runny nose, cough, sore throat, etc.).

Keep the Holidays Healthy

Plan Ahead for Safe Holiday Gatherings

The best gift you can give others in the 2020 holiday season is doing what you can to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It's surprisingly easy to do.

Outside of your social bubble (your immediate household members plus a few people you consistently interact with) stay six feet apart. That means keeping your distance from relatives, friends, coworkers—and anyone else who is not part of your close circle.

It's Not About You

Think of it as doing others a favor by reducing the chance that you could unknowingly spread COVID-19 to them if you are infected but have no symptoms. It can take up to 2 weeks after exposure to develop symptoms... and some who are contagious never even know they have COVID-19.

Even if you're not concerned about your own health, no one wants to be the one to infect someone else. For many people, the illness is mild; but COVID-19 can be deadly, especially for older adults and people with underlying conditions.



Know Before You Go

So, before you RSVP to that holiday party, here are some things to consider:

- How many people are expected?
Will there be more than six people outside your bubble?
- Is anyone invited to attend at high risk for serious complications (older or chronically ill)?
- Will guests be asked to stay home if they feel sick?
- Will everyone be wearing masks (except for eating and drinking)?
- Will you be able to avoid hugs and handshakes?
- Is there enough space to social distance?
- Will chairs be spaced 6 ft. apart? Or will everyone be seated at a table?
- If there is a meal, will it be served restaurant-style (best), self-serve buffet style (good), or family style, with dishes passed between guests (shared items = shared germs)?

If you *do* go, have a plan for what you (and your plus-one) will do if people aren't taking precautions, or if the event makes you feel "overexposed" and uncomfortable.

You can graciously decline an invitation by telling the hosts you'd prefer to get together alone with them at another time. Alternatively, you could suggest meeting virtually for coffee or happy hour.

COVID-19 is the "gift" that keeps on giving when we don't take precautions. In 2020, the best gift we can all give is to keep our germs to ourselves.

Nearly nine million
have been infected and
OVER 225,000
have died in the U.S. due to COVID-19

Source: CDC COVID Data Tracker (October 2020)

Let the Doctor Come to You

It's Like a Free House Call

Your Health Plan includes many health services—at no cost to you—that you can access without ever leaving home. That means you stay safe by keeping your social distance from others and avoiding germs in a doctor's office waiting room.

TELADOC

Access virtual care, 24/7/365, by phone or video chat at no cost to you. Call (800) TELADOC (835-2362), go to [Teladoc.com](https://www.teladoc.com), or download the Teladoc app.

- **Non-urgent medical issues.** Talk to a board-certified doctor or pediatrician, who can diagnose and prescribe medication for non-

emergency minor illnesses like flu, allergies, bronchitis, sinus infections, urinary tract infections, stomachaches, and much more.

- **COVID-19 symptoms.** If you have fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19, a Teladoc provider can advise you on whether you should be tested and help locate a testing facility.
- **Skin conditions.** Upload images and get a treatment plan and prescription, if needed, for skin conditions like acne, eczema,

- **Back, shoulder, neck, hip or knee pain.** Get an expert review of your medical records, understand non-surgical options, find answers to your questions, and get specialist referrals.
- **Expert medical advice.** Get a second opinion, help understanding treatment options, advice about a personal health challenge, or a referral to a specialist for your condition.
- **Oncology insight.** Best Doctors uses artificial intelligence to help

Feel Sick This Fall?

Make Teladoc Your First Call

Sore throat? Runny nose? Cough? Fever? Fatigue?

Talk to a doctor without ever leaving home...and you won't risk getting someone else sick or picking up unhealthy germs at a doctor's office.

Teladoc gives you 24/7 access to a doctor or pediatrician who can diagnose and prescribe medication for minor illnesses. There is no cost to you: no copay or deductible required. Go to [Teladoc.com](https://www.teladoc.com), download the app, or call (800) TELADOC (835-2362).

And don't forget—Teladoc is available to you for mental health and dermatology visits, too!



psoriasis, rashes, and more.

- **Mental wellness.** Get confidential counseling for depression, grief, anxiety, family issues, and more. Register online, select a provider and schedule a time to talk from the comfort of your own home. (Must be age 18 or older.)

BEST DOCTORS

World-renowned specialists help you make informed medical decisions with confidence. Call (866) 904-0910, go to members.bestdoctors.com or download the Best Doctors app.

give cancer patients comprehensive details on different treatment options and identify potential clinical trials.

- **Behavioral health navigator.** For members facing mental health conditions, this service integrates care and coordinates virtual access to expert providers.
- **Medical records summary.** Have your medical records collected and organized on an easy-to-access USB drive, along with a summary of your overall wellness.

Healthy CONNECTIONS



Healthy Connections provides general information about the Alaska Electrical Health & Welfare Fund. For more information, please refer to the Summary Plan Description book available by calling the Administrative Office. In the event of conflicting information, Plan documents and Plan booklets will govern.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Remember...

If you are Medicare eligible, you must enroll in both Part A & Part B



Be A Hero. Wear a Mask.



Your mask may protect them. Their masks may protect you.

Let's keep the number of COVID-19 illnesses and deaths low in Alaska. Wear masks in public, keep your social distance, practice good hygiene and stay home if you are sick or have been exposed to the virus.

#practicesafesix
#maskingforafriend

Source: Mask Up Alaska!

Source: coronavirus.alaska.gov

