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Your Partner in Health: **Care and Services for a Healthy Pregnancy**

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Prenatal medical care improves the health of the pregnant person and their baby. Care that starts in the first trimester and continues regularly throughout pregnancy can prevent complications to support a smooth birth and healthy baby.

Once a person thinks they may be pregnant, it is important to schedule a visit with a medical provider to confirm the pregnancy and review options for care. An appointment with a medical provider in early pregnancy is typically scheduled eight to 10 weeks after the last menstrual period. An ultrasound in the first 14 weeks accurately confirms the stage of the pregnancy and predicts the estimated date of delivery. During the first health care visit in a pregnancy, the provider will discuss with the individual the options available.

For those who choose to continue a pregnancy, early and regular prenatal visits allow access to medical care and other services that improve the health of the pregnant person and the pregnancy. As the pregnancy progresses, there are many changes for the pregnant person and fetus. It is important to monitor these changes and address any concerns.

After the first visit, the scheduling of visits is based on the individual's risks for complications and needs that arise during pregnancy. In these visits, the provider learns more about the health of the patient and can identify early risks or complications in the pregnancy. In addition, the provider works with the patient to develop a plan for labor and delivery. During pregnancy care, providers screen for depression, substance use, and other medical conditions. Treating depression, anxiety, and stress improves the health of the pregnancy; untreated mood disorders and other conditions can negatively affect the pregnancy. These effects can last for months after

the birth. Treatments for mood disorders and other health conditions during and after pregnancy helps parents take care of themselves and their baby.

Newborns and young infants are especially vulnerable to infections. Vaccinating a pregnant person passes the protection to the developing baby. To protect parents and babies, it is recommended that pregnant people are vaccinated for flu, DTaP (whooping cough), RSV, and COVID. Infections such as these can create complications in a pregnancy. Infants who catch these infections can become very ill and may require hospital care. Vaccines given during pregnancy are safe and healthy for the pregnant person and the baby.

Doulas can provide additional support during pregnancy. Doulas are birth workers who support individuals during pregnancy, labor, and after childbirth. Doulas are trained to provide emotional, physical, and informational support and are not clinical providers. They can offer guidance, support, and advocacy to improve a birthing experience. Typically, doulas do not work directly in prenatal medical offices. Some insurances – including Partnership HealthPlan of California – cover the services provided by doulas.

Timely prenatal care is important to the health of a pregnancy. It is important to establish care with a medical provider early in pregnancy and to continue regular care throughout pregnancy and after delivery. Health care services during and after pregnancy are essential to maximize the health of the parent and baby.

Partnership HealthPlan of California connects its Medi-Cal members to important pregnancy care through the Growing Together Program – including support after the baby is born. For more information, visit the [Growing Together webpage](#) on Partnership’s website, [PartnershipHP.org](#).

Dr. Colleen Townsend is a regional medical director at Partnership HealthPlan of California.

About Partnership HealthPlan of California: Partnership is a community-based, safety-net health care organization that contracts with the state to administer Medi-Cal benefits. Partnership provides quality care to about 900,000 Medi-Cal members. Starting in Solano County in 1994, Partnership now serves 24 Northern California counties – Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, Yolo, and Yuba. Learn more about Partnership at [PartnershipHP.org](#).

About *Your Partner in Health*: Partnership shares quarterly articles on important health topics with media outlets in our service area to help our members and communities be healthy.