

PCP E-NEWSLETTER

Cigna Medicare Advantage

August 2020

QUICK CLICKS

- 1 [SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH - ISOLATION AND DISTANCING](#)
- 2 [LOW INCOME SUBSIDY OVERVIEW](#)
- 3 [COVID-19 RESOURCES](#)
- 4 [CAHPS CORNER](#)



COVID-19 resurgence message from the Texas Chief Medical Director

To all our health care heroes,

As we're all aware, COVID-19 diagnoses have increased in Texas, particularly in larger urban population centers. Many of the newer cases involve a younger population segment, likely due to relaxed social distancing practices.

It's important to remember that the risk to older adults continues, including our Cigna Medicare Advantage patients. I encourage all of us to continue exercising caution in patient care.

- › Screen patients prior to admitting them into the office for routine care.
- › Limit the number of patients in the waiting room at one time.
- › Encourage patients to continue to social distance, wear face coverings in public and wash hands frequently.

Please contact your high-risk patients and reassure them that you are accessible in-person, by phone or virtually, based on resources. Remember that during this public health emergency, telehealth requirements are relaxed, enabling much of our population to access care virtually via different platforms. While this is not the ideal in some instances, it may enable some level of care and avoid unnecessary visits to the ER.

Finally, thank you to all our frontline heroes providing care for our patients. Please continue to exercise your own personal precautions. You're a vital part of our health care network supporting those most in need. Stay safe. Stay well. Stay strong.

We're with you,



Dr. Carlos Gonzalez
Chief Medical Director



All Cigna products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation. The Cigna name, logos, and other Cigna marks are owned by Cigna Intellectual Property, Inc.

© 2020 Cigna. Some content provided under license.

INT_20_88289_C

945837

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (SDOH)

Social isolation

Social isolation is a growing concern, especially for older adults. During the COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation may have an increasingly negative impact on our patients' emotional health.



Continued on next three pages

Breaking down barriers

Social isolation

Social isolation can have a significant impact on your patients' overall well-being, especially for your elderly patients. On the flip side, increased social support can positively influence health outcomes – both behaviorally and psychologically – by helping people stick to healthier diets, reduce emotional stress and more.¹

Did you know?

3 out of 5

Americans consider themselves lonely²

Social isolation and loneliness lead to higher risks for:³

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Weakened immune system
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Cognitive decline
- Alzheimer's disease
- Death

Medicare spends an additional

\$134

on socially isolated individuals⁴



Lonely people are **27%** more likely to use skilled nursing facilities, and their monthly costs are **\$75 higher**⁴

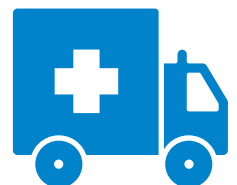
Loneliness can also increase care utilization⁵



68%
higher hospitalization

57%

higher ER visits



Five things you can do to help



Start the conversation

Create space for patients to talk about their loneliness by asking validated questions. Many **tools** exist to help guide conversations with patients and assess how they are feeling.



Encourage connections

Share the 24/7 Institute on Aging's **Friendship Line** for people 60+ experiencing mental health challenges or loneliness: 800-971-0016. You can also suggest prayer lines or pen pal programs.



Know the local resources

Provide patients a list of contact information for adult day cares, specific support groups or volunteer opportunities (like foster grandparent programs) in your area.



Assure them they're not alone

Remind patients they can **call 211** to connect with human service agencies and community organizations that can best help those in need of assistance.



Identify those at risk

If a patient seems to need more urgent help, share the 24/7 **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** for people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis who need support: 800-273-8255.

For more resources, visit [CareAllies.com](https://www.careallies.com).

1. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/social-cohesion>
2. <https://www.cigna.com/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/>
3. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/social-isolation-loneliness-older-people-pose-health-risks>
4. <https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/ppi/2017/10/medicare-spends-more-on-socially-isolated-older-adults.pdf>
5. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12224678/>

All CareAllies products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation, including CareAllies, Inc. The CareAllies name, logo, and other CareAllies marks are owned by Cigna Intellectual Property, Inc. All pictures are used for illustrative purposes only. 938780 06/20 © 2020 CareAllies



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH *continued*

Social distancing

Dr. Joe Nicholson, Chief Medical Officer for CareAllies and Kim Villarreal, LCSW and Community Health Advocate Team Lead for CareAllies, share insight on how we can address concerns around the impact of social distancing on emotional health in this eight-minute podcast.

- Download a list of free support lines and ideas to help patients stay connected while socially distancing [here](#).
- For more resources to help with SDOH, go to <https://www.careallies.com/insights/>.

Sources:

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/social-cohesion>



LOW INCOME SUBSIDY OVERVIEW

Low Income Subsidy (LIS) or “Extra Help” under the Medicare Part D prescription drug program can help your patients afford their medication. This is a federal benefit provided by the Social Security Administration that reduces medication copays for eligible patients.

Approval is based on income and resources relative to the federal poverty level guidelines. Patients with combined savings, investments and real estate worth less than \$29,160 (if married) or \$14,610 (if single) may be eligible. For application and screening support, individuals may contact:

- Medicare toll-free: **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) [TTY number: 1-877-486-2048]**
- The Social Security Administration at **1-800-772-1213 [TTY number: TTY 1-800-325-0778]** or online at: <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/prescriptionhelp/>
- Human Arc’s Premium Assist: **1-877-236-4471** or visit: <https://screening.centaurihs.com/PremiumAssist>

Remind your patients that LIS benefits may require renewal year-to-year. The Social Security Administration may send your patient a letter asking for updated information on financial status in order to assess renewal of LIS benefits. In these situations, patients should promptly return documentation to be evaluated for LIS renewal.

Note: LIS beneficiaries pay the same set generic or brand medication copay for a 90-day supply as they would for a 30-day supply. It’s important to encourage patients to request the 90-day supply to save money, reduce trips to the pharmacy and improve adherence. Please review the chart for copays at each subsidy level and coverage phase.

LIS LEVEL	DEDUCTIBLE	INITIAL COVERAGE LIMIT	COVERAGE GAP	CATASTROPHIC COVERAGE
LIS Level 1	\$0	\$3.60 generic copay \$8.95 brand copay	\$3.60 generic copay \$8.95 brand copay	\$0
LIS Level 2	\$0	\$1.30 generic copay \$3.90 brand copay	\$1.30 generic copay \$3.90 brand copay	\$0
LIS Level 3	\$0	\$0 generic/brand copay	\$0 generic/brand copay	\$0
LIS Level 4	\$89	15% coinsurance	15% coinsurance	\$3.60 generic copay \$8.95 brand copay

COVID-19 RESOURCES

At Cigna, we're closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and have put together provider resources and information to keep you up to date and informed. Please visit [MedicareProviders.Cigna.com](https://www.MedicareProviders.Cigna.com).

Additional resources

- › CareAllies has COVID-19 resources available here: www.careallies.com/coronavirus
- › Providers can access the UptoDate Pathways for COVID-19 treatment guidelines at <https://pathways.uptodate.com/pathway/127865>.
- › Common COVID-19 clinical questions and answers can also be accessed at <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/127454?source=icg&topicId=127865&anchor=H00#H00>



CAHPS CORNER

Health Outcomes Survey (HOS)

Update: HOS mailing postponed to August for 2020 dates of service due to COVID-19.

The HOS is sent to a random sampling of Medicare Advantage patients. It's related to patient-provider relationships and asks questions related to physical and emotional health, incontinence, physical activity, fall risk and prevention, and other topics. HOS data helps The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services monitor health plan performance based on patient health outcomes. It also affects about 12% of Star Quality Ratings that help Medicare beneficiaries choose a health plan. A baseline HOS is sent in April and respondents still in the Medicare Advantage Organization two years later get a follow-up HOS in May.

HOS - Monitoring physical activity

Providers can positively impact HOS results by starting important conversations during office visits. Ask questions, create recall and take actions that align with key HOS measures.

Example HOS questions

In the past 12 months . . .

- › Did you talk with your provider about your level of exercise or physical activity? For example, did your provider ask if you exercise regularly?
- › Has your provider advised you to start, increase or maintain your level of exercise or physical activity? For example, did your provider advise you to start taking the stairs, increase walking every day or maintain your current exercise program?

Continued on next page

CAHPS CORNER *continued*

Actions you can take

- › Provide Silver&Fit® program information
- › Talk about the importance of exercise and physical activity
- › Discuss how to start, increase or maintain activity
- › Follow up with patient
- › Provide recall

Improving health care effectiveness

You can help increase your patients' level of physical activity while positively impacting HOS scores.

- › **Engage** – Ask patient to describe their level of physical activity
- › **Educate** – Inform patient about benefits of exercise
- › **Evaluate** – Evaluate patient's health and lifestyle
- › **Empower** – Recommend starting, increasing or maintaining activity level
- › **Encourage** – Suggest activities such as adding more steps and increasing walking



SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

Please email us any questions you have or topics you'd like discussed. Our goal is to tailor our content to meet your needs. We look forward to hearing from you at:

PCP_ENewsletter_Team2@HealthSpring.com

