

Arkansas Total Care Provider Newsletter



A Step in the Right Direction

As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to support our members' physical and mental health. Diet and exercise are critical, but due to extended social distancing guidelines, it can be a challenge for our members to get the [recommended 150 minutes of physical activity every week](#). Exercising at home works for some, but distractions in the home, lack of space, or other obstacles may make it difficult for others. The good news is that there is a form of exercise that benefits their physical and mental health while still adhering to the CDC's social distancing guidelines: walking.

Regular physical activity promotes overall physical health. According to the CDC, [walking is a great way to work toward a healthier lifestyle](#). This means that no matter where your patient is in their health journey, walking can help them work toward their goals. Walking outside is also a great way to get out of the house and enjoy the fresh air while still maintaining a safe distance from others.

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Walking is also beneficial for our members' mental health, as it provides an opportunity to interact with others in a healthy and safe way. While walking outside, they may see a neighbor or friend and can talk while maintaining a safe distance. During the pandemic, many have suffered from mental health problems due to loneliness and isolation, so it's important to socialize safely when possible.

Taking a walk outside can also reduce the effects of [seasonal affective disorder](#) (SAD) by exposing our members to more sunlight. Being outside in general can improve their mood and mental health by boosting their energy and serotonin levels.

Walking is less strenuous than other forms of exercise, and it improves overall health. As the weather warms up, people may be more willing to add one or two outdoor walks to their daily routines. We recommend encouraging your patients to make daily walks part of their health journeys as they are able. While it may seem small, any step in the right direction can be a step toward helping our members reach their best health.

Pharmacy Benefits — Preferred Drug Lists

Arkansas Total Care utilizes the Arkansas Medicaid preferred drug list (PDL) which provides easy access to information on which drugs we cover. Both brand-name and generic drugs that have been approved by the FDA are included in the PDL, consistent with the Arkansas Medicaid PDL.

Note that the PDL is not intended to be a complete list of all drugs covered by the health plan. For example, not all dosage forms or strengths of a drug on the PDL may be covered. Additionally, some drugs that are not listed on a PDL may be covered if they are proven to be medically necessary for a member as not every therapeutic category of drugs is listed on the PDL.

Arkansas Total Care reviews the PDL periodically to reflect changes from the State and Arkansas Medicaid. Drugs may be added or removed, or additional requirements may be implemented for the continued use of a specific drug. Please see the Arkansas Medicaid Provider Memo for the most recent changes.

The most current PDL is available on our Arkansas Total Care Pharmacy page. This page also hosts information about Envolve Pharmacy Solutions, Arkansas Total Care's pharmacy benefit manager, a link to Envolve's portal, and other topical pharmacy information. If you have questions about our PDL or pharmacy benefits, please contact Envolve Pharmacy Solutions at 800-460-8988.

Updated Non-Medical Support Services Policies

Effective January 1, 2022, our non-medical support services policies (CC. BH.UM.28) were amended. Please visit our [clinical and payment policies page](#) to review these changes, which can be found under the ARTC Non-Medical Support Services Policy dropdown. If you have any questions about these updates, please contact us at 1-866-282-6280 (TTY: 711) or by email at Providers@ArkansasTotalCare.com.

Improving Patient Engagement in Behavioral Health

At Arkansas Total Care, we're committed to helping Arkansas live better. We know that our provider partners are just as committed to our member's health, and we are always working together to provide the best care and support. This includes working with members to set health goals and creating plans to reach those goals. Patient engagement in goal setting and care planning is essential to this process. However, members can sometimes feel disconnected or removed from their care plans, making it difficult for them to follow through. Some members need encouragement to get engaged in their healthcare plans. Engaging with members about their care plans can:

- ▶ Improve their health outcomes
- ▶ Increase their sense of agency when it comes to their care
- ▶ Give them the opportunity to ask questions to better understand their plans, especially patients with low health literacy skills
- ▶ Reduce the chance that they become overwhelmed by the information that they receive
- ▶ Make it more likely that they will stick to their care plan

You can promote patient engagement by using the RESPECT model. The principles of the RESPECT model are:

- R** Rapport
- E** Empathy
- S** Support
- P** Partnership
- E** Explanations
- C** Cultural Competence
- T** Trust

See below for ways that you can use each principle of the RESPECT model to engage with members.

Rapport -----

- Try to connect with your patient on a social level.
- Try to see things from their point of view.
- Do not make judgments or assumptions.

Empathy -----

- Remember that the patient is there for help.
- Ask about their concerns.
- Verbally acknowledge how they are feeling.

Support -----

- Ask about your patient's barriers to care and to following their care plan.
- Help them identify ideas and resources that may be helpful.

- Ask if there are people that can help them meet their goals.
- Reassure them that you are willing to help throughout their health journey.

Partnership -----

- Let the patient know that you will work together as a team.
- Check in with your patients as often as necessary.

Explanations -----

- Check with your patient often to be sure that they understand everything you are saying.
- Clarify verbally, when needed.

Cultural Competence -----

- Respect the patient and their cultural beliefs.

- Keep in mind that their view may be shaped by cultural differences.
- Be aware of your own biases.
- Accept that, due to your own knowledge of their culture, it may be difficult to connect with them, and be patient.
- Observe whether your approach is working and if it isn't, adjust the approach.

Trust -----

- Take the time to build trust with your patients.
- Respect their boundaries and wait for them to share with you; don't push.

By utilizing this model, you can ensure that your patients are working towards their goals and living better.

Helping Patients with Asthma

According to the CDC, [more than 25 million Americans have asthma](#). It can be caused by a variety of factors, including genetics, environment, and even occupation. Because patients with asthma are at greater risk of being hospitalized from COVID-19, it's important that we give our members the tools and education they need to manage their asthma and protect themselves from respiratory illnesses.

After diagnosis, you can help your patients manage their asthma by identifying their triggers, creating a treatment plan, and prescribing asthma medicines as needed.

Some of the most common asthma triggers include:

- ▶ Dust mites
- ▶ Air pollution
- ▶ Mold
- ▶ Allergies
- ▶ Tobacco smoke
- ▶ Pets
- ▶ Respiratory infections

The types and amounts of asthma medicine a patient needs depend on the severity of their condition. There are two main types — quick-relief and long-term control. Quick-relief medicines can help patients get their asthma attacks under control soon after they happen. Long-term control medicines, on the other hand, can help patients experience fewer attacks with milder symptoms. Long-term medicines will not help during an asthma attack, though, so patients may need to be prescribed both quick-relief and long-term control medicines.

The CDC's National Asthma Control Program (NACP) has developed a set of strategies to help asthma patients manage their symptoms. With [EXHALE](#), patients can learn the following strategies:

- E** **Education** on self-management.
- X** **X-tinguishing** smoking and unnecessary exposure to smoke.
- H** **Home visits** to reduce asthma triggers and increase self-management education.
- A** **Achievement** of guidelines-based medical management.
- L** **Linkages** and coordination of care across settings.
- E** **Environmental practices** to reduce asthma triggers from indoor, outdoor, and occupational sources.

Protecting Patients During COVID-19

Patients with moderate, severe, or uncontrolled asthma are more likely to be hospitalized from COVID-19. To help protect these patients, talk to them about what they can do to protect themselves. Encourage your patients to get vaccinated against COVID-19, and to get their booster shots. Emphasize the importance of wearing a mask that covers the nose and mouth, social distancing, avoiding crowds, and using hand sanitizer.

Resources for Patients

One of the best ways to help your patients succeed is to provide them with the tools they need to manage their conditions. The resources below can be used to help inform your patients about their asthma and teach them how to manage their symptoms.

[EXHALE Guide for People with Asthma, Their Families, and Their Caregivers \(PDF\)](#)

[Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America \(AAFA\) — Asthma Triggers](#)

[National Environmental Education Foundation \(NEEF\) — COVID-19 and People with Asthma](#)

Case Management: Managing Chronic Conditions

All Arkansas Total Care members have designated care coordinators that help them define goals for their care and create plans to reach their best health. In addition to care coordination, members also have access to case management, a free program that provides tailored assistance to help manage chronic conditions. While care coordination focuses on the member's total health and works with the member long-term, case managers work with members to control one chronic condition. Once the member has developed strategies to control the condition, that case manager will not contact the member again.

If you believe a member may benefit from case management, contact the member's care coordinator, or call Arkansas Total Care at 1-866-282-6280 (TTY: 711).

With case management, members get one-on-one assistance managing chronic conditions like:

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Asthma
- ▶ Cancer
- ▶ Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ Hypertension
- ▶ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- ▶ Substance abuse disorders

Provider Webinars

Each quarter, we host a variety of provider webinars to discuss health plan news, updates, and incentive program details. These webinars are designed to increase our dialogue with you, as well as offer important training and information that help better facilitate office administrative tasks. These topics can include orientations for providers new to our network, tips for navigating the provider portal, requirements and deadlines for our provider incentive programs, and topical updates for each quarter.

Our [provider webinars page](#) lists upcoming webinars and hosts a sign-up form where you can register to attend future webinars. You can also request topics for future webinars and view material from past presentations. The fastest way to get provider news and alerts, including information about upcoming webinars, is to sign up for our provider email distribution list using the form on our [provider resources page](#).



Managing Symptoms in Members with Allergies

With warmer weather on the way, many are looking forward to spending more time outside for exercise and recreation. Members with seasonal allergies may need additional support in managing their symptoms during the spring months. Additionally, those with stinging insect allergies may be more likely to experience insect stings in the spring and summer. Talk with your patients about any allergies they have and discuss their treatment options.

When recommending over-the-counter medicines to alleviate seasonal allergies, be sure to discuss questions and concerns your patients may have about these medicines, including possible side effects.

The CDC recommends the [following measures](#) to mitigate the effects of pollen:

- ▶ Check local pollen forecasts and try to limit time outdoors when levels are high.
- ▶ Take allergy medications as recommended by your doctor.
- ▶ Try to limit touching your eyes when you are outside, and always wash your hands when you go inside.
- ▶ Shower and change your clothes after being outside. This helps remove pollen from your skin and hair.
- ▶ Keep windows closed when pollen levels are high.
- ▶ Use high-efficiency filters in your heating and cooling system. Make sure your system can use high-efficiency filters and that using these filters doesn't violate the system's warranty.

As with any chronic condition, remember to document allergies in your patient's medical record during their annual wellness visit.



Stay Informed: Sign up for Provider Emails

At Arkansas Total Care, we work to ensure all our providers have access to news regarding policies, procedures, webinar offerings, and incentive programs. The fastest way to get important updates is to sign up for our provider email distribution list. As we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, getting information to our provider network is critical to streamlining administrative tasks as we shift to navigate the changing health landscape and the needs of the community. To sign up to get important notices via email, visit the [for providers section of our website](#) and fill out the form toward the middle of the page. After entering a few fields, including your group name, group NPI and Tax ID, you'll be registered to receive these important updates.

Policy Updates and Changes

We share important clinical and payment policy updates with our providers on a regular basis. When policies are updated, we will alert you via mail 90 days prior to the effective date of the new or updated policy.

What Are Clinical Policies?

Clinical policies are a set of guidelines used to help administer health plan benefits via prior authorization or payment rules. They include policies relating to evolving medical technologies and procedures, as well as pharmacy policies.

We use InterQual® criteria for medical technologies, procedures, or pharmaceutical treatments for which an Arkansas Total Care clinical policy does not exist.

What Are Payment Policies?

Payment policies are guidelines used to assist in administering payment based on accepted principles of correct coding. They are used to help identify whether healthcare services are coded correctly for reimbursement.

Each payment rule is sourced by a coding principle. These include claims processing guidelines referenced by CMS, state-specific claims reimbursement guidance, and health plan clinical policies based on the appropriateness of care and medical necessity.

Occasionally, we may employ a vendor that applies payment policies to specific services. In these cases, the vendor's guidelines may be used to determine whether a service has been coded correctly. Additionally, other policies or contract terms may determine whether a technology, procedure, or treatment not addressed by Arkansas Total Care is payable by the health plan.

Where Can I Find More Information?

Clinical and payment policies for Arkansas Total Care are available online at [ArkansasTotalCare.com](https://www.arkansasTotalCare.com). From the For Providers menu, select Provider Resources, then Clinical & Payment Policies.

If you have questions or concerns about the policies listed on our website, we're happy to talk with you. Please contact our Medical Management team at 1-800-294-3557 (TTY: 711).