

CARING FOR ASTHMA

WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH



ALAMEDA
Alliance
FOR HEALTH

Dear Member,

At Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance), we are here to help you take charge of your asthma. As your health partner, we created this care book. We hope it helps you stay healthy and active.

Best of Health,
Alliance Health Programs

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IN THIS CARE BOOK...

You will learn how to take care of your asthma or your child's asthma. We help answer some questions you may have about what makes asthma get worse and what you can do to prepare for those episodes and prevent them.

Work with your doctor to follow your asthma plan so that you can keep your asthma under control. Once your asthma is controlled, you or your child should be able to do anything that someone without asthma can do!



Here is an example of what learning to manage your asthma looks like:

Ms. S didn't know that her son Brian had asthma until he woke up one day wheezing and scared. He said, "Mommy, it's hard to breathe!" She called his doctor, who said they should go to the emergency room to get help. At the hospital, they learned that her son has asthma. They went home with new medicines and a lot of advice. Ms. S knew she had to do what she could to not end up in the emergency room again.

The next week at her son's follow-up appointment, his doctor helped her connect with Asthma Start, a home visiting program for children. The home visitor explained what happens during an asthma episode and which medicines to take when. Most of all she helped Ms. S find and avoid things that could trigger her son's asthma, such as dust and mold. Ms. S now uses nontoxic cleaners, her son carries his medicine wherever he goes, and he takes his medicines each day. Brian has not let his asthma slow him down!

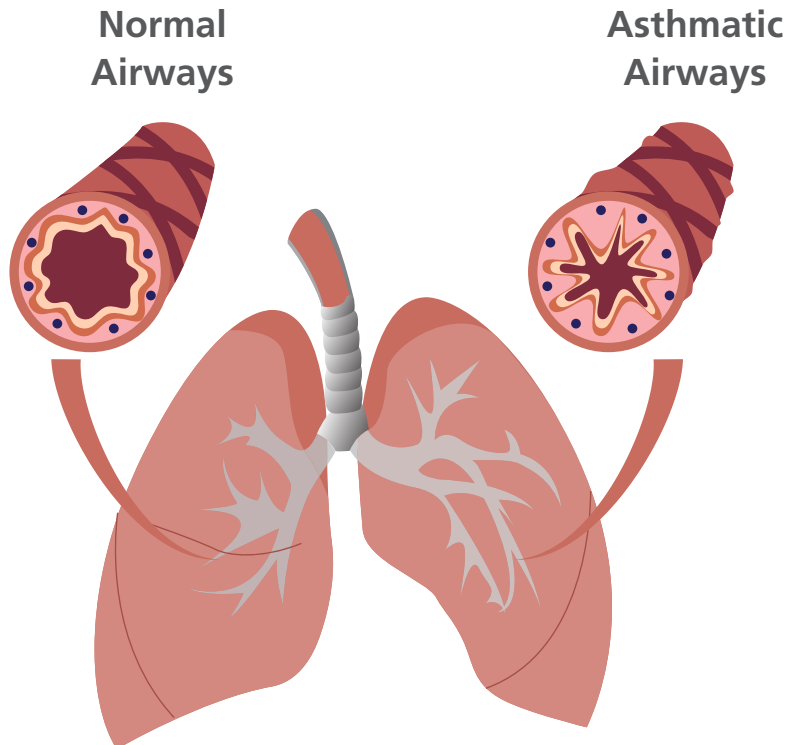


TAKING CARE OF ASTHMA

WHAT IS ASTHMA?

As we breathe, air travels in and out of our lungs through airways. Asthma is a lung disease that makes airways become inflamed and swollen. They may react strongly to certain things and bring on asthma symptoms. The things that you react to are **triggers**.

The exact cause of asthma is unknown and may not be the same for each person. There is no cure. But, you can control your asthma.



WHAT ARE ASTHMA SYMPTOMS?

- **Coughing**
The cough is often worse early in the morning or at night, making it hard to sleep.
- **Shortness of breath**
You feel like you can't breathe fully.
- **Tightness in the chest**
You feel like a strap is around your chest.
- **Wheezing**
You hear a whistle sound when you breathe out.

When your asthma symptoms become worse than usual, it's called an **asthma episode**. You may also hear it called a flare-up or asthma attack.



Brief Episode

Lasts for minutes: The muscle tightens and narrows the air tubes.

Longer Episode

Lasts for hours/days:
The lining and mucus swells.



HOW DO I TAKE CARE OF ASTHMA?

Know your triggers, such as smoke, dust, grass, cough or cold, or exercise.

Watch for changes in your asthma. You can keep your asthma symptoms from getting worse. Know what to do in case of an asthma episode.

Work with your doctor:

- ❑ Get regular asthma checkups with your doctor.
- ❑ Request an **asthma action plan**. This plan reminds you how to manage your asthma and tells you what to do when you have symptoms.
- ❑ Monitor your asthma control through tracking symptoms or peak flow meter readings. A peak flow meter is a hand-held device that shows how well air moves out of your lungs.
- ❑ Take your medicines as prescribed. You may need one inhaler for daily use and one rescue inhaler.

To download an asthma action plan or asthma diary, please visit www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library and select “Asthma”.

When asthma is under control:

- You won't have symptoms such as wheezing or coughing.
- You'll sleep better.
- You won't miss work or school.
- You can take part in all physical activities.
- You won't have to go to the hospital.





WHEN DO I NEED TO GET HELP?

Severe asthma episodes can put your life in danger and may require emergency care. That is why knowing how to take care of your asthma and when to get help is so important.

Call your doctor if: 

- Your wheeze, cough, or breathing gets worse, even after taking rescue medicine. Most rescue medicines work in 5 to 10 minutes.
- You need to use your rescue medicine more often than every 4 hours.
- You are having problems breathing.

Call 9-1-1 if:

- You have trouble walking or talking due to shortness of breath.
- Your lips or nails are gray or blue.
- Your child's skin is sucked in around neck and ribs during breaths.
- Your child does not respond normally.



WHAT DO I DO ABOUT MY CHILD'S ASTHMA AT SCHOOL OR DAY CARE?

Schools and day care centers should keep an asthma action plan for your child. Some schools have a form they want you to use. Take the form to your child's doctor to fill out. Return it to the school.

You, your child, the teacher, and the school nurse or principal/director should discuss and understand the asthma action plan.

The asthma action plan includes:

- A list of your child's early warning signs of an asthma episode.
- A list of your child's triggers. Add other things your child should avoid. (If exercise is a trigger, include the coach or gym teacher on the action plan.)
- A list of medicines:
 - Include when they should be given to your child.
 - Include any side effects.

Your child may need medicines at school. Older children can carry a rescue inhaler to school. The school should store asthma medicines in a place that is easy to get to.



Keep your child at home if they have these asthma symptoms:

- Wheezing or coughing that lasts after taking medicine.
- Hard time breathing or very fast breathing.



HOW DO I LEARN MORE ABOUT MY CHILD'S ASTHMA?

A great way to help your child is to learn more about asthma. Talk to your child's doctor or nurse. Ask your pharmacist to explain how to take the asthma medicines. The Alliance offers health education handouts, action plan forms, and an in-home support program for children.

Learn more under "Asthma" in our Live Healthy Library at www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library.

ASTHMA CHECKUPS

PREPARE FOR YOUR CHECKUP WITH THESE QUESTIONS. BRING THE ANSWERS TO YOUR DOCTOR VISIT.

1. How many times in the last month have you or your child had symptoms during the day? During the night? How many times did you or your child use rescue medicine?
2. How many days of work, school, or day care have you or your child missed due to asthma in the last month?
3. How many times have you or your child been to the emergency room or hospital since the last visit?
4. What things seem to make your asthma or your child's asthma worse?

You should also bring your own questions about asthma. Asthma is a serious disease. You play a big part in taking care of asthma. Your doctor wants to help you.

It may help your doctor if you bring these items:

- Asthma action plan**, if you have one. You may need to update it.
- Asthma diary** or record of symptoms and triggers for the last month.
- Asthma medicines**.
- Asthma devices** – peak flow meter, spacer, and any other devices you use to care for asthma.
- Home remedies or over-the-counter medicine** that you use to help with asthma.

To download an asthma action plan or asthma diary, please visit www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library and select “Asthma”.

ASTHMA MEDICINES

Your asthma medicines can prevent and treat asthma symptoms. The goal is to achieve the best asthma control that you can with the least amount of medicine.

WHAT MEDICINES DO I TAKE FOR ASTHMA?

There are two main kinds of asthma medicines. Everyone who has asthma needs rescue medicine. Many people also use a controller.

1. **Controller medicine** (long-term control medicine)

You take this to prevent symptoms and episodes. It keeps the airways from being inflamed. Use a controller every day (or as ordered by your doctor) even when you feel good.

Some common controller medicines:

- Flovent
- Qvar RediHaler®

Controller medicine will not help if you are having trouble breathing. Once asthma symptoms start, you must use your rescue medicine.



Inhaled steroids are a type of controller medicine.

Are they safe? When used as prescribed, taking inhaled steroids is safer than not being in control of your asthma.

Inhaled steroids facts:

- Not the same as the illegal steroids that some athletes use.
- Does not cause addiction.
- Helps control asthma that can slow a child's growth.
- Can cause a yeast infection in the mouth. To prevent this:
 - Use a spacer with the inhaler if needed.
 - Always rinse your mouth and spit after using the inhaler.



2. Rescue medicine (quick-relief medicine)

You take this when your asthma symptoms start. It helps stop asthma symptoms before they get worse. Your doctor may tell you to take it before exercise or play as well.

Some common rescue medicines:

- Albuterol
- Levalbuterol



Rescue medicines are very good at stopping asthma symptoms, but they don't help control your asthma. If you need to use your rescue medicine more often than normal, or if you need to use it more than 2 days a week, it may be a sign that you also need to take a controller medicine. Talk to your doctor about this.

HOW DO I TAKE INHALED ASTHMA MEDICINES?

Many asthma medicines, both rescue and controller, come in a form that you inhale (breathe in). Inhaled medicine gets right to the airways in your lungs where it is needed.

Each device for inhaled medicine is a little different. It is important for you to learn how to use your inhaler the right way.

Read the instructions that come with it. You can also ask your doctor or pharmacist to show you how to use it. Then try it yourself and ask them to make sure you are using it the right way.

If you need more help learning how to take your medicine, please call the Alliance Member Services Department and ask about Case Management.

Alliance Member Services Department

Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

Phone Number: **1.510.747.4567**

Toll-Free: **1.877.932.2738**

People with hearing and speaking impairments

(CRS/TTY): **711/1.800.735.2929**





HERE ARE FOUR DEVICES TO KNOW ABOUT:

- 1 **Metered dose inhaler (MDI) with or without a spacer**
(Example: Albuterol HFA)

A metered dose inhaler (MDI) is a small canister that releases a measured dose of medicine through your mouth. A **spacer** helps the medicine get into your lungs. Children under age 5 should use a spacer. Spacers can also help anyone older breathe in medicine from their inhaler. Ask your doctor whether you need a spacer and which one is best for you.

Using the MDI with a spacer keeps the medicine from getting on the tongue, in the back of the throat, or even on the face.

The person on the top is using a spacer. You can see how the medicine gets deep into the lungs compared to the person on the bottom who is not using a spacer.



with spacer

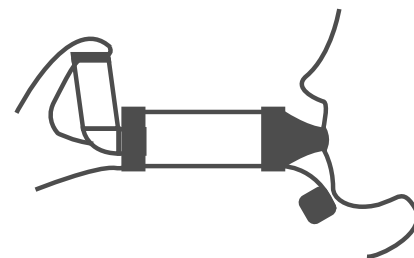
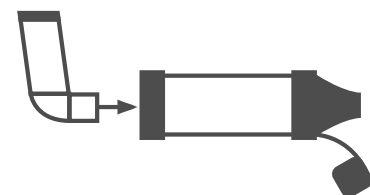


without spacer

How to use an MDI with a spacer:

Before taking the medicine, please follow the instructions for your inhaler on how to prime (spray or pump) the inhaler.

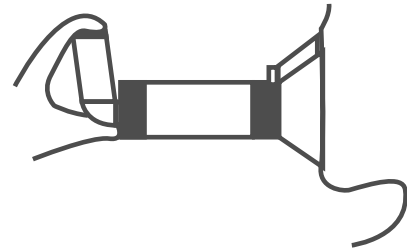
1. Remove cap on inhaler and make sure the mouthpiece and spray hole are clean.
2. Shake the inhaler 10 to 15 times. Insert the inhaler into the spacer.
3. Take a deep breath and breathe out all the way. Put the mouthpiece of the holding chamber between your teeth and above your tongue and close your lips around it.
4. Spray one puff from inhaler into the spacer.
5. Take a slow deep breath. Hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds. Take the inhaler out of your mouth and breathe out slowly.
6. Wait at least 1 minute before taking a second puff, if needed. Repeat steps 3 through 5.
7. If using an inhaled steroid, rinse your mouth with water and spit it out.



Watch a video of how to use an inhaler with a spacer at www.cdc.gov/asthma/inhaler_video (English, Spanish).

Use a spacer with a mask for children under 5 years old. Follow these steps:

1. Follow steps 1 and 2 above.
2. Place the mask over the child's nose and mouth.
3. Spray one puff from inhaler into the spacer.
4. Keep the mask on the child's face and watch the child breathe in and out 6 to 7 times.
5. Wait at least 1 minute before a second puff, if needed. Repeat steps 2 through 4.



Spacers should not be shared and should be cleaned often.

To clean a spacer:

Follow the instructions for your inhaler and talk to your doctor or pharmacist about how to clean your inhaler and spacer.

Remember:

1. Do not wash the MDI.
2. Do not brush or wipe inside the spacer.

2 Dry powder inhaler (DPI)

(Example: Wixela™ Inhub™ or Flovent Diskus)

A dry powder inhaler (DPI) releases a pre-set amount of medicine in powder form. DPIs are not used with spacers.

Tips: Rinse out mouth with water after use. DPIs can be used for 30 days after opening the foil pouch. Do NOT take this inhaler apart for any reason.



3 Soft mist inhaler (SMI)

(Example: Spiriva® Respimat®)

A soft mist inhaler (SMI) is a device filled with liquid that sprays each dose with a light mist. When you inhale the mist, the medicine goes to your lungs. It does not require a spacer, but one can be used if needed.

Tips: Hold breath for 10 seconds after inhale. Respimat can be used for 90 days after assembly. No need to shake before use.



4 Nebulizer

(Example: Duoneb® or Albuterol sulfate solution)

A nebulizer provides the medicine in a fine, steady mist through a mouthpiece or mask. They are useful for young children and some adults who have trouble using an inhaler.


Tips: Make sure the mask or mouthpiece is sealed well around the mouth. This allows the medicine to reach your lungs and help you breathe better.


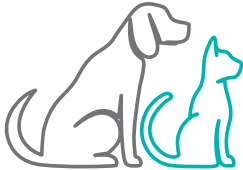



ASTHMA TRIGGERS

Triggers are things that cause symptoms or bring on asthma episodes. Triggers differ from person to person and can change over time. What are your triggers?

Remember to stay away from your triggers. This will help control your asthma!

COMMON TRIGGERS	HOW TO AVOID COMMON TRIGGERS
<p>Irritants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning products and paints • Scented products • Smoke (e.g., tobacco, wildfire, grills) 	<p>Cleaning products and paints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid being around cleaning products or paints with a strong smell. <p>Scented products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid using scented products such as perfume, deodorant, lotions, hairspray, incense, and air fresheners. <p>Tobacco smoke</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not smoke – Get help to quit. • Stay away from smokers. • Ask people not to smoke in your home or car. • Let fresh air into your house.

COMMON TRIGGERS	HOW TO AVOID COMMON TRIGGERS
<p>Infections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colds • Flu • Sore throat 	<p>Infections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a flu shot. • Keep your body healthy with enough exercise, sleep, and healthy food. • Stay away from people who have colds and flu. • Wash your hands often with soap and water.
<p>Allergens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals • Dust • Food  	<p>Animals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider not having pets with fur or feathers. • Keep pets out of your bedroom. • Wash your hands after petting animals. <p>Dust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce clutter around the bed. Wash bedding and stuffed toys in hot water every 2 weeks. • Cover mattresses and pillows in dust-proof zippered covers. • Vacuum or mop instead of sweeping. <p>Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss food allergies with your doctor or nurse.

COMMON TRIGGERS**Allergens**

- Mold
- Pests
- Pollen

**HOW TO AVOID COMMON TRIGGERS****Mold**




- Let fresh air into your house.
- Use the bathroom and kitchen stove fans.
- Fix leaky plumbing, roof, or other sources of water.

Pests

- Do not leave food or garbage out.
- Vacuum up dead insects.
- Fill in holes in the walls or floors.
- Use baits or traps; don't use sprays and foggers.

Pollen

- Stay indoors during pollen season and keep windows closed.

COMMON TRIGGERS	HOW TO AVOID COMMON TRIGGERS
<p>Environmental Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air pollution • Weather changes 	<p>Air pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On bad pollution “Spare the Air” days, try to stay indoors and close the windows. Use an air cleaner (purifier) or filter if you have one. For alerts, please visit www.sparetheair.org. <p>Weather changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dress for the weather. • When it is cold, breathe through your nose and cover it with a scarf.
<p>Exercise</p> 	<p>Exercise-induced asthma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use asthma medicine (albuterol) as ordered by your doctor.
<p>Emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Fear • Laughter • Stress 	<p>Emotions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep calm by breathing slowly. • Relax your shoulders and neck muscles.



HOUSEHOLD CLEANING AND ASTHMA

Keeping your home clean and dust-free is an important part of managing asthma. There are many cleaning products that can cause asthma or trigger asthma attacks, especially products with bleach, ammonia and vinegar. Here are some simple, low-cost ways to clean your house without causing problems for people with asthma.

Carpets, rugs, and floors

- Vacuum carpets, rugs, and floors at least once a week to reduce dust and dust mites.
- Vacuum slowly.
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter, which picks up smaller dust particles.

Cleaning hard surfaces (multipurpose solution)

- Plain water and a microfiber cloth will clean most surfaces and kill 99% of germs.

- Use a mild unscented liquid dish or castile soap with water to cut grease and grime. Use a soap without antibacterial ingredients.
- For scrubbing, add 1 tbsp. of baking soda to regular or soapy water.
- Add lemon juice to regular or soapy water for a fresh smell and to cut grease.

Dusting

- Use a dry microfiber cloth, or use a clean, slightly damp, soft cloth.

For odors

- Sprinkle baking soda in the bottom of trash cans.
- Place a bowl or open box of baking soda in the refrigerator. Replace every 2 – 3 months.
- Poke small holes in the top of a jar or plastic container. Fill the jar halfway with baking soda and close the container. Place near trash cans, litter boxes or other smelly places.

Ovens

- Scrub with baking soda or a scouring powder that does not contain bleach.
- Make a paste with 1/4 cup baking soda, 2 tbsp. salt, and a little hot water. Apply to surface. Let sit 5 minutes. Scrub well. Remove with water and microfiber cloth.

Sinks, tubs, and tile

- Add 2 or 3 tbsp. of liquid soap to water and clean with a scrub brush.
- Use baking soda or a scouring powder that does not contain bleach.
- For small amounts of mold, mix liquid soap, baking soda, and 2 capfuls of hydrogen peroxide (3% solution). Let sit on surface. Wipe clean.

Toilet bowls

- Pour a small amount of liquid soap or 1/4 cup baking soda into toilet bowl, then brush.
- Wipe toilet seat and rim with hydrogen peroxide (3% solution). Hydrogen peroxide acts like a disinfectant.

Windows, glass, and mirrors

- Indoors, use plain water and a microfiber cloth.
- Outdoors, add plain liquid soap to get rid of soot and grime.



TOBACCO SMOKE

Protect yourself and your loved ones.

The smoke from cigarettes harms the health of the smoker and the people around them. Even after the cigarette is put out, the smoke stays on hair, clothing, toys, and indoor surfaces. Keep yourself and your family safe from tobacco smoke.

Secondhand smoke is the smoke you breathe in when someone else is smoking. It could be from the burning end of a cigarette or breathed out by a smoker.

If you've ever smelled smoke on a smoker's clothes or in a room where no one is smoking, you know what **thirdhand smoke** is like. This is the toxic residue that remains long after the cigarette is smoked.



Why is tobacco smoke harmful?

- **Tobacco smoke contains at least 250 toxic chemicals.** More than 50 of them can cause cancer. The smoke contains chemicals that are in rat poison, lighter fluid, and batteries. Some of the chemicals in thirdhand smoke are not the same because the smoke changes over time. It can become even more toxic.
- **Tobacco smoke harms nearly every organ of the body.** People who smoke or who breathe it in are more likely to get lung cancer, heart disease, asthma, and other health problems.
- **Tobacco smoke hurts babies, kids, pregnant people, and your pets.** Smoke hurts babies and kids more than adults because their bodies are small and still growing. It also harms a baby's development before they are born. Babies, kids, and pets breathe in more thirdhand smoke when crawling on floors and furniture or playing with toys.

Keep your family healthy and safe.

- If you smoke, quit. Talk to your doctor about making a plan and medicines that can help you quit.
- If you cannot quit now, there are ways to keep smoke away from others:
 - Avoid smoking in your home, car, or places where your family spends a lot of time.
 - Wear a jacket you only use when you smoke to keep smoke off your clothing. Leave it outside and wash your hands and face when you are done.
- Make your home and car smoke-free. Do not allow anyone to smoke in or near your home.
- If your family members are smokers, work with them to find outdoor places and times for smoking. Ask them to think about quitting.
- Make sure your children's day care, schools, and babysitters are tobacco-free or nonsmoking.
- Be a good role model by not smoking. Teach your children to stay away from secondhand smoke.
- If your home smells like tobacco smoke, you may need to replace bedding, furniture, or other surfaces to reduce thirdhand smoke.



Help to quit smoking:

Looking for help to stop smoking? Kick It California (formerly California Smokers' Helpline) can help you quit. Call them toll-free at **1.800.300.8086** or visit **www.kickitca.org**.

You can also find tools and tips to quit on **www.smokefree.gov** (English, Spanish).

You don't have to do this alone!

To find out more about how to quit smoking, please call Alliance Health Programs at **1.510.747.4577** or visit **www.alamedaalliance.org/live-healthy-library** and select "Quit Smoking".



**CARING FOR
ASTHMA**

journal

*Please use this section to take notes about
your progress and any questions that
you want to ask your doctor.*

“ People will forget what you said.
People will forget what you did.
But people will never forget
HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.”

– Maya Angelou

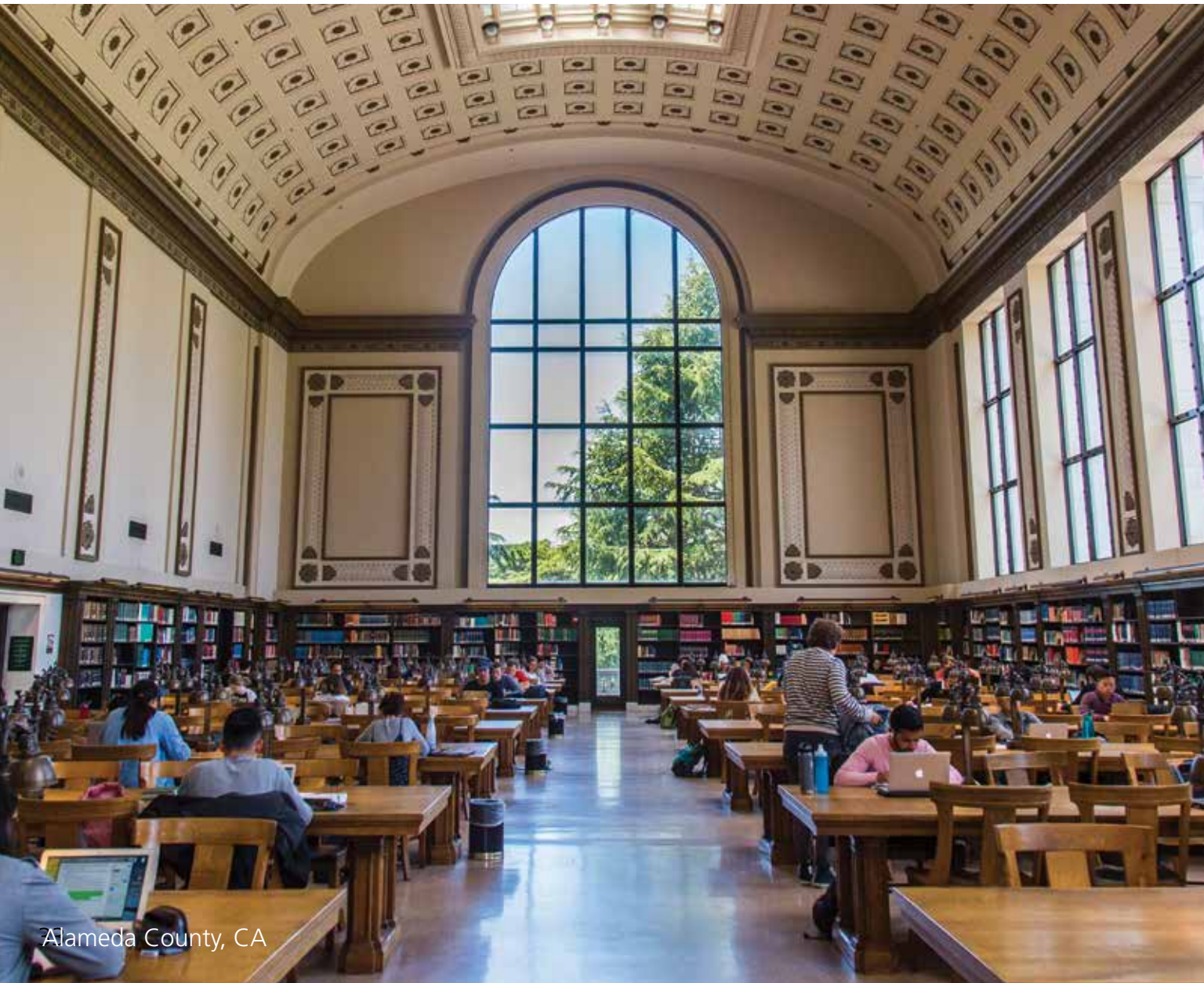
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“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

– Abraham Lincoln



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Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

Phone Number: **1.510.747.4577** • Toll-Free: **1.855.891.9169**

People with hearing and speaking impairments (CRS/TTY): **711/1.800.735.2929**

www.alamedaalliance.org