



Inside: Preventive health care tips you can save!

Health Plus news

Your community's guardian angel since 1984

things to know

How to prepare for Pap tests

These aren't the kind of tests you study for. But there are ways to get ready for Pap tests.

A Pap test looks for cancer of the cervix. The test is given during your pelvic exam.

The best time to have a Pap test is 10 to 20 days after the first day of your last period. You shouldn't have a Pap test during your period.

For two days before the test, don't use any kind of vaginal douche, cream, foam, or medicine. Avoid having sex for 24 hours before the test.

Don't miss your chance to recertify!



We've got you covered, and we want to keep it that way.

Wondering when **you** need to recertify for another year of Health Plus?

You must recertify before **one year** from the effective date on your membership card. So check your card and call **1-888-809-8009**. We're here to help.



Breast cancer Know your risk

Do you know your risk of getting breast cancer? Being a woman increases your chances of getting the disease. But there are other things that put you at risk.

Your risk increases as you get older. You are also more at risk than other women if you:

- Have had breast cancer.
- Have a mother, sister, or daughter who's had breast cancer.
- Have two or more blood relatives, such as aunts or cousins, who've had breast cancer.
- Have never had children or had your first child after age 30.

- Drink alcohol regularly.
- Are overweight.

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these risks. Your doctor can tell you when and how to check for breast cancer.

Get annual mammograms

A mammogram uses an x-ray to take pictures of your breasts. It can find a lump that your doctor can't feel during a breast exam.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women ages 40 and older have an annual mammogram.

Plan to have a mammogram one week after your period. Your breasts are less tender then.

On the day of the test, wear a shirt with pants or a skirt. That way you can undress from the waist up. You also shouldn't use deodorant, perfume, lotion, or powder under your arms or on your breasts.

For a list of sites where you can get a mammogram without a long wait for an appointment, please call Health Plus Member Services at **1-800-300-8181**.

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How to lower blood pressure

What goes up must come down.

At least, if your doctor says your blood pressure is up, it really should come down.

High blood pressure can put you at risk for problems such as heart attack, stroke, and heart failure.

But you can reduce those risks by taking these steps to get your blood pressure back in a healthy range.

Lose weight if needed. Being at a healthy weight means your heart doesn't have to work so hard. Talk to your doctor for help losing weight. Also:

- Drink water when you get hungry between meals. Or eat a piece of fruit.

- Eat high-calorie or high-fat foods less often.

- Plan healthy meals ahead of time.

- Be more active.

Take your medicine. Sometimes you'll need a little extra help getting blood pressure under control. Take all medicine your doctor tells you to. And take it just as prescribed.

Get plenty of exercise. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of activity most days of the week. But talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program, especially if you haven't been active for a while.

Eat well. Include plenty of fruits and vegetables in your diet,



as well as low-fat or fat-free dairy products.

Also limit salt (sodium) as much as possible. Try cooking with herbs and spices to add flavor, instead of reaching for the saltshaker.

Source: American Heart Association

Diabetes and your eyes

It's wise to take care of your eyes when you have diabetes.

Having diabetes makes you more likely to have eye problems. High blood sugar levels can lead to vision loss and blindness.

The longer you have diabetes, the more likely you are to have eye problems.

But there are steps you can take to protect your eyes.

First, you should see an eye doctor at least once a year. Finding early signs of eye disease and getting treatment can help you avoid more serious problems later on.

To take good care of your eyes:

- Keep your blood sugar under control.
- Bring down high blood pressure.
- Don't smoke.
- See your doctor right away if you have blurred vision or eye pain.

If you do have eye problems, there are good treatments available. Talk to your doctor about the best treatment plan for you.

Sources: American Diabetes Association; National Institutes of Health



Free workshops!

If you have asthma or diabetes, Health Plus offers free health education workshops to help you manage these conditions. If you are interested in these workshops,

please call us at **1-888-743-3508**.

For a current schedule of other free health education workshops, you can visit our website at www.healthplus-ny.org. Just click on the "Free Health Workshops" link.

Your health care team expands

New York-Presbyterian joins our network

We have good news for you and your family!

New York-Presbyterian Hospital (formerly Columbia Presbyterian), Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, and Allen Pavilion in Washington Heights have been added to the Health Plus network of participating hospitals.

New York-Presbyterian Hospital is one of the most comprehensive university hospitals in the world, with leading specialists in every field of medicine. It is made up of two well-known medical centers: New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center and New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Known for excellence

New York-Presbyterian Hospital has earned a reputation as an international health care leader. Whether providing specialty care to the tiniest newborns, performing complex heart

surgery, or offering complete primary care, New York-Presbyterian Hospital delivers excellence in health care with compassion and caring.

We're glad to be partners

Health Plus, which has been providing access to free and affordable health care to the communities of New York City since 1984, will now have a new partner in its mission to see that all New Yorkers get the health care they need and deserve.

"We at Health Plus are pleased to have the entire Washington Heights-based New York-Presbyterian Hospital System in our network," said Clifford D. Marbut, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Health Plus.

"This is a great step forward in the further development of our provider network. And this will be a fantastic advantage for all our members living in the Washington Heights area and throughout New York City."

Choosing a PCP

Health Plus has a large primary care provider (PCP) network available.

A PCP is a doctor who usually specializes in one of four different areas: family medicine, general medicine, pediatrics, or geriatrics.

When choosing a PCP, it is important to first find out if the provider is covered by your health plan and is taking new patients. Here are some questions you should ask:

- Which hospitals does the provider work in?
- What are the office hours?
- Does the provider or someone else in the office speak my language?
- Are there other providers in the office who can see me when the provider is not there? Who are they?
- How long does it usually take to get an appointment with the provider?
- What are the provider's fees? Do I need to pay when I am at the office, or will I be sent a bill?
- What do I do if I need to cancel an appointment?
- What do I do if I have an emergency or if I need medical help after hours?
- Does the provider give advice over the phone for common medical problems?
- Can I contact the provider by e-mail?

Health Plus providers practice in many community hospitals, private and free-standing clinics, and private practices. For help finding a provider, please call Member Services at **1-800-300-8181**.

Did you know?

We can help you find a doctor!

Health Plus's *Provider Directory*, with the latest listing of our health care providers, is available for you.

To request a copy, please call

1-800-300-8181

or visit our website at

www.healthplus-ny.org



Helping your overweight child

These days more and more kids are overweight. And that's a concern.

When kids weigh too much, they might not feel good about themselves. And being overweight can raise their risk for a number of health problems.

If you think your child is overweight, talk to his or her doctor.

If the doctor says your son or daughter does need to lose a few pounds, these tips may help:

Make it a family affair. Don't focus on changing the habits of just your overweight

child. Instead, think of this as a time to help the whole family. You all can benefit from eating better and being more active.

Be active with your children. Go bicycling after dinner, for instance. Kids may look forward to exercise if it's something that's fun for them.

Plan healthy meals. Serve plenty of fruits and vegetables. And try to cut back on portion sizes and foods high in fat. Don't have fast food often.

Eat together. Kids learn about good nutrition by watching what and how you eat.

Limit down time. Don't let your kids spend more than two hours each day watching TV or playing computer games.

Above all, make it clear that you love your child no matter how much he or she weighs. Your support will mean a lot.

Your child's doctor may mention your child's body mass index (BMI). BMI is used by doctors to help identify an obese or overweight child or adult. Ask your child's doctor about the BMI number and what it means.

Calculating your child's body mass index

Weight alone doesn't tell the whole story. A better number is your body mass index, or BMI. Doctors can use your child's age, gender, and BMI to tell if your child is overweight or obese. You can calculate your child's BMI by using this formula:

- A. _____ times 703 = _____.
child's weight (pounds)
- B. _____ times _____ = _____.
child's height (inches) child's height (inches)
- C. _____ divided by _____ = _____.
answer A answer B body mass index

Then go online to www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/, or see your doctor, to determine your child's weight-related health risk.

Sources: Institute of Medicine; National Institutes of Health



Health Plus Telephone Numbers

Main Number 1-718-745-0030
 Domestic Violence Coordinator 1-718-491-7545
 Member Services 1-800-300-8181
 Marketing 1-800-809-8009
 Tele-Nurse 1-800-437-PLUS
 (1-800-437-7587)
 24-Hour Mental Health Line 1-866-223-9500

www.healthplus-ny.org

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HEALTH PLUS is a not-for-profit health care plan committed to quality health care and dedicated to the health and well-being of our culturally diverse communities through partnerships with members, providers, and community-based organizations.

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Moving?



If your address and/or phone number has changed, let us know. Our files need to be kept up-to-date so that you don't miss any notices.

To update your information, call Health Plus at **1-800-300-8181**.

Preventive health care tips



| What should you be concerned about? | What should you know about it? | When should you be tested? |
|--|---|---|
| Lead poisoning | <p>Childhood lead poisoning is preventable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children with lead poisoning may be at risk for health, learning, and behavioral problems. Even low blood lead levels may cause problems. Children should be fully immunized by age 2. Immunizations are also required for children to attend day care and school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every child MUST be tested for lead at both ages 1 and 2. Talk with your child's doctor. |
| Immunizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to taking your child to the doctor when he or she is ill or when there is an emergency, routine well-care visits are recommended to help keep your child healthy. Well-child visits include physical exams as well as monitoring the growth and development of your child. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children should receive immunizations during well-child visits (from birth to 2 years old). Additional immunizations are required during later years. Talk with your child's doctor to learn more about how many visits your child needs during the growing years. |
| Adolescent well-care screenings (ages 13 to 19) | <p>During a health checkup, teens receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A complete physical exam and information about good nutrition and healthy lifestyles (for example, prevention of AIDS and other diseases). Annual teen health checkups can help keep teens in good physical, mental, and emotional health. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk with your child's doctor to learn how many visits your teen needs during the adolescent years. |
| Breast cancer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early detection is the best protection against breast cancer. Women ages 40 and older should have a screening mammogram every year. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can take three steps for early detection of breast cancer: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Breast self-examination Clinical breast examination Mammogram |
| Cervical cancer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cervical cancer is preventable and is one of the most successfully treated cancers when detected early. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every year women should visit a gynecologist or a primary care doctor for a pelvic exam and a Pap test. |
| Chlamydia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection that can affect a woman's reproductive health. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every year sexually active women 25 or younger should visit their gynecologist or primary care doctor and get tested for chlamydia. The most reliable way to find out whether you have chlamydia is through laboratory testing of fluids (for example, urine samples). |
| Depression and mental health | <p>Severe mental illness is debilitating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental illnesses, such as depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, are leading causes of disability in the United States. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you've ever been hospitalized because of a mental illness, it is very important to receive follow-up care immediately (within seven days) after you have been discharged from the hospital. Call your doctor or Health Plus for help with follow-up care after hospitalization. |

CHILDREN

WOMEN

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

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| What should you be concerned about? | What should you know about it? | When should you be tested? |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>Diabetes</p> | <p>It can cause serious health problems, such as heart disease and kidney disease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For diabetes prevention and control, you should be physically active, maintain a healthy weight, eat a healthy diet, and take your medications as prescribed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage diabetes, make sure your Hb A1C is under control. Hb A1C is a blood test that lets you know how well your sugar is being controlled. Have an eye exam (including a retinopathy screening test) and urinalysis once a year, or as recommended by your doctor. Have a lipid profile test done once a year. This blood test measures your cholesterol levels. If you have type 2 diabetes, you should be tested for microalbuminuria (an early sign of kidney damage) at the time you were diagnosed and every year thereafter. People with type 1 diabetes should be tested five years after diagnosis and every year thereafter. Microalbuminuria is usually managed by improving blood glucose control, reducing blood pressure, and modifying your diet. |
| <p>Asthma</p> | <p>Effective management of asthma can decrease the number of missed school and work days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to your doctor about an asthma action plan. There are two main kinds of asthma medicine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rescue medications (like Albuterol), which should be taken when you have symptoms of asthma or an asthma attack. Control medications, which should be taken every day, even when you're not feeling symptoms of asthma. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk with your doctor about your asthma at every visit. Fill your prescription medications as instructed by your doctor. Visit a specialist (pulmonologist) as recommended by your primary care doctor. Monitor your asthma. Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. |
| <p>Hypertension</p> | <p>High blood pressure is the single most important risk factor for stroke.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only way to tell if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked. Normal blood pressure should be less than 120/80 mm Hg for an adult. Blood pressure above 140/90 mm Hg is considered high. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit your doctor and get your blood pressure checked regularly. Also, eat healthy foods that are low in fat and sodium, and get regular physical activity. If you are taking blood pressure medicine, it is important that you take it according to your health care provider's instructions. |
| <p>Cholesterol</p> | <p>Did you know that high cholesterol is a leading cause of heart disease and stroke?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High cholesterol causes no symptoms. You'll only know you have it if you get a blood test. People can often prevent or reduce high cholesterol with physical activity and a healthy diet. If these changes don't lower cholesterol enough, your doctor may prescribe medication. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit your doctor every year for a physical examination. A cholesterol screening is especially important for people with heart disease, those who are overweight or obese, or those who aren't physically active, have diabetes, have high blood pressure, smoke, or have a family history of heart disease. |

If you have a chronic condition, you should see your doctor *at least once a year*. If you would like to speak to a health educator at Health Plus, call 1-718-491-7477. Start your New Year's resolutions early. Be sure to get the tests you or your child needs by the end of this year!