

Fall 2023

Health letter



You can earn a reward for taking care of your health!

When you see this symbol, go to metroplusrewards.org to learn how you can earn a member reward.

Mammograms help find breast cancer

Breast cancer is easier to treat when it's found early. The best way to find breast cancer early is to get regular mammograms.

What happens during a mammogram?

An X-ray machine will push each breast between 2 panels before taking a picture. You will feel some minor pressure. However, it will last for only a few seconds.

How should I prepare for a mammogram?

Don't wear lotion, perfume, or deodorant under your arms or on your breasts the day of the exam. These products can make it harder to read the X-ray. Also, tell the X-ray technician if you are breastfeeding or might be pregnant.

When should I get a mammogram?

Here is when women at average risk should get a mammogram:

- Ages 40 to 44: You have the option to get a mammogram every year.
- Ages 45 to 54: Get a mammogram every year.
- Ages 55 and older: Keep getting mammograms every year. Or you can get one every 2 years. Your doctor can help you decide.



Earn a \$20 reward!

Get your mammogram to earn a \$20 reward. To report your mammogram, [click here](#).

How to lower your risk

Some things can help lower your risk for breast cancer. Read about these **5 lifestyle strategies**.

VISIT US AT [METROPLUS.ORG](https://metroplus.org)

Do you speak a language other than English? MetroPlusHealth has Member Services staff who speak your language. If you need help making an appointment, call the Member Services Department at 800.303.9626 (TTY: 711).

Living with low back pain

Low back pain is a common problem. It can cause mild pain to severe pain. Low back pain can be caused by a strain, sprain, or injury around the spine. Other causes include arthritis, disk problems, or fractures. But some back pain is caused by being stressed, being overweight, or not being active enough.

In most cases, you don't need to see your doctor for back pain. Why? Back pain usually goes away in a few days with no treatment. But there are things that can help until it gets better. When you have back pain, do stretching exercises. Also, go back to your normal activity as soon as you can. Staying in bed too long can make back pain worse. Ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter pain reliever like ibuprofen. This can help reduce pain and swelling.

If your back pain does not get better after a few days, call your doctor for advice.



Keep your back healthy

For helpful tips on taking care of back pain, **watch this video.**

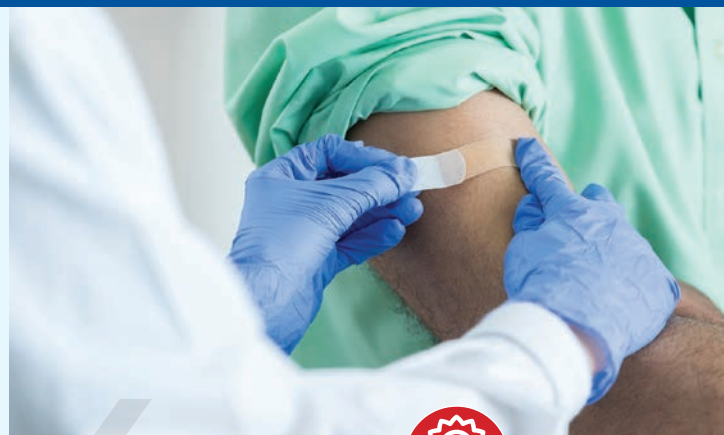
It's time for a flu shot!

All people 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine every year. This includes pregnant women.

A good time to get your flu shot is in September or October. But even if you get your flu shot later, it is still recommended. To find a flu vaccination site, **click here.**

You may also need a pneumonia vaccine. Ask your doctor about the vaccines you need and when to get them.

Protect you and your family from germs by washing your hands often. If water isn't available, use hand sanitizer. Also, try to stay away from people who are sick.



Earn a \$10 reward!



Report your flu shot to earn a \$10 reward. Also, get all COVID-19 shots and boosters.

CAHPS survey reminder Watch your mail for the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) survey. Fill out the survey to say how well MetroPlusHealth and your doctors are meeting your needs.

Get help for depression

Depression is a serious health issue. It can affect your mood and thoughts. When you feel depressed, it can be hard to imagine getting better. Depression causes many **symptoms**. Here are some common signs:

- Feeling very sad or empty
- Having trouble sleeping
- Feeling anxious
- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy
- Feeling worthless
- Having problems thinking

Have you had symptoms for more than 2 weeks? Talk with your doctor. Depression can be treated. Your doctor will help find the best treatment for you.

Medication for depression is called antidepressants. There are many types of antidepressants. Counseling may also help.

MetroPlusHealth also offers Virtual Visit. Get care anytime, anywhere over video or phone. Find out more about **Virtual Visit**.



988 suicide and crisis lifeline

If you are thinking about harming yourself or others, call or text **988** or **800.273.TALK (8255)** to get help right away. You can also chat with counselors at **988lifeline.org**. Lifeline is free and available 24/7.

Help prevent cervical cancer

The most common cause of cervical cancer is **human papillomavirus (HPV)** infection. You can get HPV by having sex with someone who has the virus. However, not every HPV infection will turn into cancer. HPV may go away on its own. Only certain types of HPV can lead to cervical cancer. You can lower your risk for cervical cancer by getting the HPV vaccine.

Here are the recommendations from the **CDC**:

- Children ages 11 to 12: Get 2 doses. The doses are given 6 months apart.
- Teens and young adults ages 15 to 26: Get 3 doses. The doses are given over 6 months.

There's also a vaccine for adults ages 27 to 45. Talk with your doctor to decide if it would be helpful. To learn more about cervical cancer, **take our quiz**.

You may not need an antibiotic

When you feel sick with a **cold** or the **flu**, you might want relief as soon as possible. But asking your doctor for antibiotics won't help. Antibiotics don't work for colds or the flu. If you take antibiotics when you don't need them, it can make bacteria stronger. **Bacteria can become resistant**. This means that antibiotics won't work anymore.



ARE YOU UP-TO-DATE? Get your flu shot and all COVID-19 shots and boosters if you have not already. **Report your flu shot** to earn a \$10 reward. Also, ask your doctor when you should get the pneumonia and shingles vaccines.

Get motivated to quit smoking

Quitting isn't easy. But if millions of people can do it, so can you.

Quit-smoking programs can help you kick the habit. But finding a personal reason for quitting can help you through hard times. Here are a few things to think about:

Your health

Quitting smoking lowers the risk for heart disease, stroke, lung disease, and cancer. But you don't have to wait for these health benefits. Did you know that your body begins to heal after you stop smoking? Your blood pressure drops just 20 minutes after your last cigarette.

Your wallet

Smoking isn't cheap. Think of all the things you can do with your **savings when you quit**. In New York City, a pack of cigarettes is about \$15. If you smoke a pack every day, that can add up to about \$450 every month.



Your family

Secondhand smoke can cause health problems for your loved ones. And it can take you away from them earlier. On average, smokers die 13 years sooner than nonsmokers.

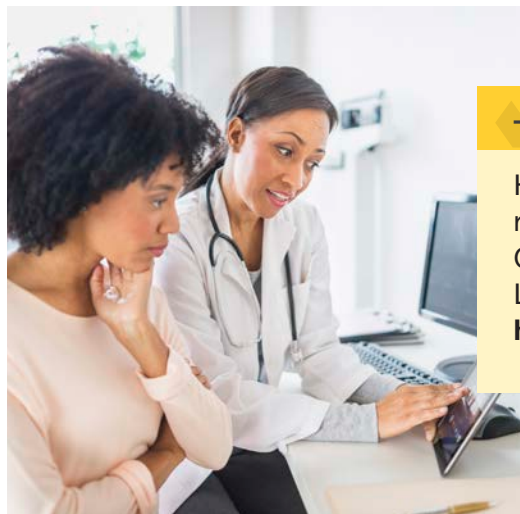
Want to quit smoking? Start today.

Visit smokefree.gov or nysmokefree.com for help. You can also get support through the NY State Smokers Quit Line at **800.697.8487**. To receive FREE nicotine patches or lozenges, call **311** or **866.697.8487**.

Are you due for a colonoscopy?

Colonoscopy can help your doctor look for any problems in your colon. It is also used to screen for **colorectal cancer**. Screening can find colorectal cancer at an early stage. This is when it may be easier to treat. Screening can prevent the cancer from growing by finding and removing polyps.

Screening should start at age 45 for people at average risk. People at higher risk for colorectal cancer should start screening sooner. Talk with your doctor to find out when you should get screened.



Take action

How can you lower your risk for colorectal cancer? One way is to get exercise. Learn more about other **healthy lifestyle tips**.