

Fall 2024

Health letter



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

Get your flu shot

It's flu shot season again. A flu shot helps protect you from the flu, so you don't miss school, work, or time with friends and family. And if you do get sick, a flu shot can lessen your symptoms — so you'll feel better, faster. Getting a flu shot is also a good way to protect your loved ones. If you don't get the flu, you can't spread it to others.

Who needs a flu shot?

Experts recommend all people ages 6 months and older get a flu shot every year. It's especially important if you:

- Have a long-term health problem, like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease
- Are pregnant
- Are age 65 or older
- Are younger than age 5

Don't forget the pneumonia shot

Ask your doctor about the pneumonia shot, too. Adults ages 65 and older and children younger than 5 may need one.

Take steps to avoid the flu

To help stop the spread of germs and avoid the flu, wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



Earn a \$10 reward

You can earn a \$10 reward for getting your flu shot. Also, get all COVID-19 shots and boosters if you haven't already. To register for member rewards, click [here](#).



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. Need help making an appointment? Call the Member Services Department at **800.303.9626 (TTY: 711)**.

Why is it important to get a mammogram?



A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast that checks for breast cancer. It can help find cancer early, before you have symptoms. When you find cancer early, it is less likely to have spread. Finding cancer early also means you can get treatment sooner.

How often you need a mammogram is based on your age. This is what the American Cancer Society recommends:

- **Ages 40 to 44:** You can choose to get a mammogram every year.
- **Ages 45 to 54:** Get a mammogram every year.
- **Ages 55 and older:** You can keep getting mammograms every year. Or you can get one every two years. Your doctor will help you decide.

If you are at high risk for breast cancer, you may need to get a mammogram earlier. Ask your doctor for advice.

Earn a reward



Get your mammogram to earn a reward. To register for member rewards, click [here](#).

Get screened for colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer is a type of cancer that grows in the colon or rectum. Colorectal cancer screenings check for cancer early, before you have symptoms. Having a test for cancer can be scary. But if you find colorectal cancer early, it is easier to treat. Here's some information about two test options.

- **Stool tests** check your stool for blood. This test is done at home.
- **A colonoscopy** uses a tube with a camera to check inside your rectum and colon. The doctor will look for cancer and polyps. Polyps are cells that can turn into cancer. During the test, the doctor can remove any polyps.

Most people need to start screening for colorectal cancer at age 45. If you do a stool test, you need a check every year or every three years. This will depend on the type of stool test you use. If you have a colonoscopy, you need a test every 10 years.

People at higher risk might need to start testing before age 45. Or you might need to have the tests more often. Your doctor can help you decide.

Earn a reward



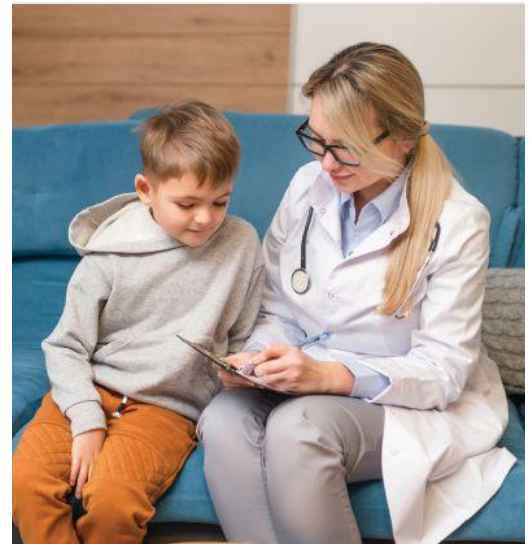
Get your colorectal cancer screening to earn a reward. To register for member rewards, click [here](#).

Quit smoking today! To search for NYC smoking cessation programs and resources, click [here](#). For free nicotine patches and lozenges, please call **866.NY.QUITS (866.697.8487)**.

Why MetroPlusHealth asks for information on race and ethnicity

As a member of MetroPlusHealth, you may be asked about your race and ethnicity. You might wonder why we want to know this personal information and what we do with it. Those are good questions. We want you to know that it is safe to answer, and we will keep your answers private. We use this data in your medical record so we can give you better care and service. Here are some things we may do with your information:

- Send you messages in the language you prefer
- Send you mail about health benefits
- Match you with doctors who speak your language
- Keep track of the number of members of each race we care for
- Help us give you the best care possible



Know the facts about HPV and cancer

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus. It can be spread by having sex. HPV is also the cause of many types of cancer. More than 90% of cervical and anal cancers are caused by HPV.

But you can stop HPV — and these cancers — by getting the HPV vaccine.

Your child should have the first shot at age 11 and 12. Then the second shot six to 12 months later. However, HPV vaccination can start at age 9.

What if your child is older than 12 and hasn't had both of their HPV shots? Talk with their doctor about catching up.

To get more information about immunization schedules for children and adolescents, click [here](#).



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

Get help for depression

Everyone feels sad once in a while. But having depression can make you feel unhappy most of the time. Depression can make it hard to eat, work, sleep, or see friends. The good news is that you can get help.

Know the signs

Some common symptoms of depression include:

- Sadness that does not go away
- Feeling hopeless
- Lack of interest in things you enjoy
- Feeling tired or having low energy
- Not sleeping well or sleeping too much
- Thoughts of death

Get help

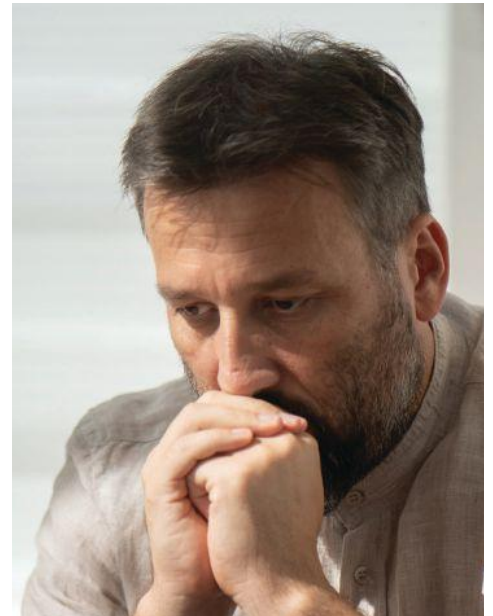
If you think you might have depression, talk with your doctor. Common treatments for depression are therapy, medicine, or both.

A therapist can teach you how to cope with problems. The therapist can also help you change unhealthy thoughts and behaviors.

There are many medicines you can take for depression. They're called antidepressants. These medicines can take up to four to eight weeks to start working. Be sure to keep taking the medicine, even if you don't feel better right away.

Tell your doctor if you have any side effects that bother you. You may need to try a few medicines before finding the best one for you.

Once you find a medicine that works, take it for at least nine to 12 months so your depression doesn't come back. Don't stop taking the medicine without talking with your doctor first. They can help you decide how and when to safely decrease your dose.



988 Suicide & 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 Lifeline at **988lifeline.org**. Lifeline is free and available 24/7.



How to take care of back pain

In most cases, it's not necessary to see a doctor for **back pain**. Why? Back pain usually gets better on its own. If you have back pain, try using ice packs to ease the pain. You can also use heating pads for 20 to 30 minutes at a time to help stop muscle spasms. If the pain doesn't get better in a few weeks, call your doctor.

You may not need an antibiotic

Are you sick with a cold or the flu? Taking an antibiotic won't help. If you take an antibiotic when you don't need it, it can make bacteria stronger. Bacteria can become resistant. This means that antibiotics won't work anymore. Talk with your doctor for advice.