

# health letter<sup>®</sup>

www.metroplus.org

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## HOW TO KEEP YOUR heart healthy

→ Both high blood pressure and high cholesterol can cause heart disease and stroke.

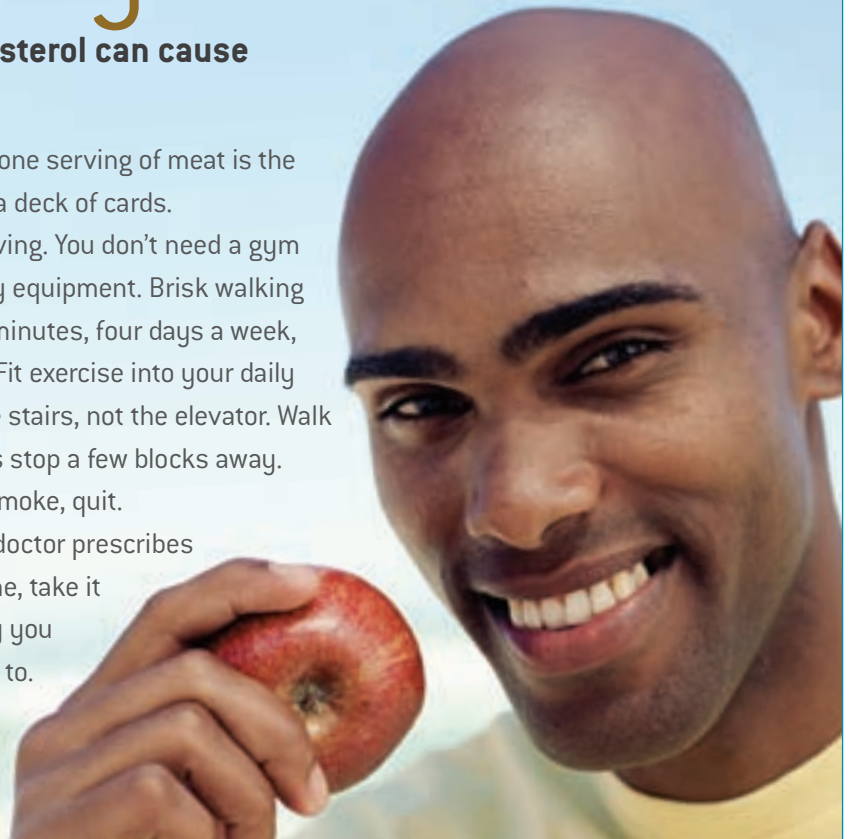
Neither condition can be cured, but both can be controlled. Since these conditions do not have symptoms, you won't know you have a problem unless you are screened regularly.

### To stay on top of your health:

- See your Primary Care Provider (PCP) at least once a year. Your blood pressure and cholesterol are checked at each visit. Normal blood pressure is below 120/80. A healthy cholesterol level is below 200 total and above 60 HDL ("good") cholesterol. Talk to your doctor about levels that are right for you.
- Eat a healthy diet, and stay at a healthy weight. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables. Avoid fried foods. Choose smaller serving

sizes—one serving of meat is the size of a deck of cards.

- Get moving. You don't need a gym or fancy equipment. Brisk walking for 30 minutes, four days a week, works. Fit exercise into your daily life. Use stairs, not the elevator. Walk to a bus stop a few blocks away.
- If you smoke, quit.
- If your doctor prescribes medicine, take it the way you are told to.



**Site News** Recently, the Department of Health announced that there are high rates of undiagnosed diabetes. To help bring these rates down, **Gouverneur Healthcare Services** has started a weekly screening program in its lobby every Wednesday. The program helps people who have or might have diabetes get the care they need. It also increases awareness of the roles of diet, body weight, glucose levels and BMI in overall health.

### Get a Provider Directory

This book lists all the doctors—PCPs and specialists—in the MetroPlus network. To get a copy, call MetroPlus Member Services at **1-800-303-9626**. Or, go online to [www.metroplus.org](http://www.metroplus.org). On our website you can also request a new ID card, tell us about an address change or change your PCP.

### Renew and Keep Your Health Insurance!

MetroPlus is here to help you. When you get your renewal notice from HRA, call us: **1-800-475-METRO**. We can help on the phone or tell you where to go in your neighborhood. We want you to stay a MetroPlus member. Call us *anytime*.

### Reminders

- If you have a hearing problem, you can use a special device (TTY machine) to call Member Services: **1-800-881-2812**.
- Every family member needs a complete physical exam once a year. Call your PCP to make an appointment for each adult *now*. If your children see a pediatrician, make an appointment for each of them.
- Did you move or change your phone number? If so, please call Member Services: **1-800-303-9626**. To help keep you healthy, we need to know how to reach you.

## Brand-Name and Generic Drugs: What's the Difference?

→ A brand-name drug is named by the company that makes it. Tylenol™ is a brand-name drug.

A generic drug is made the same way as a brand-name drug. But, the generic is sold by the name of its main ingredient. Acetaminophen is the generic form of Tylenol.

A generic drug has the same active ingredients as a brand-name drug. The generic drug should treat an illness or condition just as well as a brand-name drug does. Generic drugs often cost less than brand-name drugs because drug companies spend less money creating and advertising new products. Sometimes the same company makes both the brand-name and the generic drug. When a drug is new, there is no generic for some time, usually years.

If your doctor prescribes a generic drug, don't worry. The drug will work the way it should.



**Generic drugs work as well as brand-name drugs, but they cost less.**

## METROPLUS HAS A PREFERRED DRUG LIST

MetroPlus always looks for ways to give members the best, most efficient healthcare. We created a Preferred Drug List that took effect Oct. 1, 2007.

The Preferred Drug List means that some medications (for example, Zocor, which helps control cholesterol levels) are

no longer covered. However, a substitute medication (for example, Simvastatin) is available and covered by the Plan. You can continue the medication you already take until Dec. 31, 2007.

If you have any questions about the Preferred Drug List, please call Customer Services: **1-800-303-9626**.

# ROBOTIC SURGERY

## FOR PROSTATE CANCER



**By Alfred Winkler, M.D.**  
Dr. Winkler is the regional director of urology for the Queens Health Network.

He is a MetroPlus provider who sees patients at Elmhurst Hospital Center.

→ **Prostate cancer** affects one in every six American men. Your risk is higher if you are African-American or if a close relative (father, brother or uncle) has or had the disease.

Many men don't have symptoms in the early stages of prostate cancer. Others may. Some symptoms, such as the need to urinate often, especially at night; trouble starting to urinate; or weak or interrupted urine flow, may be due to simple enlargement of the prostate. Pain or burning when urinating and blood in urine or semen may be the sign of a more serious problem. Any of these symptoms means you should be checked by your Primary Care Provider.

Men need to see their doctor regularly to stay healthy. Ask your doctor when you should start prostate cancer screening. The screening is a physical exam as well as a blood test that detects the level of a protein in your blood. Based on the results, other tests, including a biopsy (removal of tissue for more study), may be done.

If tests show early-stage prostate cancer, one approach is surgery. The newest method for prostate surgery uses a robot guided by a specially trained surgeon. With robotic surgery, cuts are tiny. There is very little blood loss. Patients heal faster and usually get back to regular activities and return to work in half the time as those with traditional surgery. Also, with robotic surgery, the nearby nerves are less likely to be affected.

The new robotic prostate surgery is available at Elmhurst Hospital Center.



## Are You at Risk For GESTATIONAL DIABETES?

→ This is a high-blood-sugar problem that only affects pregnant women. Untreated, it can cause problems for mothers and babies. Your risk increases if you:

- Have a family member with diabetes
- Are overweight
- Are African-American, South or East Asian or Hispanic
- Had a stillborn baby, a very big baby or had gestational diabetes when you were pregnant before
- Are over 25 years old

The good news is that gestational diabetes usually goes away after your baby is born.

Keep all your prenatal appointments. If you develop gestational diabetes, your provider will tell you what to do.

Starting treatment early is best for you and your baby.

If you need help, call our MetroMom Case Manager:  
**1-800-ASK-METRO.**



**MetroMom**  
The key to healthy babies



## ABOUT

## FAMILY PLANNING

→ **Family planning** helps you control how many children you have and when you have them.

If you have sex and don't want to get pregnant, you should use birth control. There are many different kinds, including pills, injections, skin patches, condoms and more. No method—other than not having sex—is 100 percent effective, but many work very well. For some types, you need a doctor's prescription. You can buy other kinds over the counter.

Only one method—the latex male condom—protects against HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Plan B is a pill for use after unprotected sex. It is not a regular family planning method. If you are over age 18, you can buy it yourself. Otherwise, after unprotected sex, call your OB/GYN, or go to a family planning clinic right away. On

weekends, go to an emergency room.

The right kind of birth control is one you and your partner like. Choose a method you can use every time you have sex.

Remember: Women can get pregnant even if they only have sex once without using birth control. Whatever method you choose, be sure you know how it works, how to use it and what its side effects are.

Family planning information and birth control are free at MetroPlus healthcare sites. Other places that can help are Planned Parenthood: **1-800-230-PLAN (7526)** or the National Women's Health Information Center: **1-800-994-9662**.

At MetroPlus sites and others listed in this article, whatever you do is confidential. No one but you will know.

## Is It a Cold Or the Flu?

→ **Cold and flu season is almost here.** Very likely, someone in your family will come down with one or the other this winter.

A cold and the flu are very different. Both can make you feel awful. But the flu can be much more dangerous. Young people and people with chronic (ongoing) diseases like asthma and diabetes can get very sick from the flu. They can even end up in the hospital.

### Know the Difference Between Colds and the Flu

Both colds and the flu can cause sneezing, runny nose, sore throat and a cough. But the following are usually signs of the flu, not a cold:

- High fever (102 to 104 degrees) lasting three to four days.
- A bad headache that lasts.
- Body aches and pains.
- Feeling exhausted and weak. This feeling may last two to three weeks.
- Severe chest pain when coughing.

### What to Do

There isn't much you can do if you catch either a cold or the flu. Just get plenty of rest. Drink lots of fluids. If you have a bad cough or aches and pains, ask your PCP what to take.

If your symptoms last more than two weeks, call your doctor. And, if you have a chronic disease and think you have the flu, let your doctor know.