

SPRING 2011



# metroplusgold

*health news*

*we care for our own*



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# Spring cleaning:

## Don't forget the medicine cabinet!

**B**esides a basic scrub, spring is a good time to get rid of old or expired medicines. A no-longer used drug can pose a risk to someone it wasn't prescribed for as well as to children and household pets. Tossing old medications also lowers the risk of unintentional use, overdose and illegal abuse.

### How do I throw away medicine?

To throw out medicine the right way, check the instructions that it came with. If you no longer have them, dispose of medicine in the trash. First, remove it from the container. To protect your privacy, remove the label containing your personal information and shred it, or scratch out any personal information on the label if you can't remove it. Make the medicine unappealing by mixing it with kitty litter or used coffee grounds and



adding water. Put the mixture into a container, seal it and throw it into the trash.

### What about flushing?

Only about 12 drugs are safe to be flushed down the sink or toilet. For

a list of these drugs, visit the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's website and use the search terms "disposal by flushing." If you have questions about medicine disposal, talk to your pharmacist. 🌸

## Medicine cabinet must-haves

Everybody takes a little spill here or there or gets a cough or diarrhea and then stumbles around the bathroom trying to find cough medicine or other medication. That's why you should have these medicine cabinet essentials always on hand.

- ☀ Hydrogen peroxide for wounds
- ☀ Antibiotic ointment
- ☀ Adhesive bandages and sterile gauze pads
- ☀ An oral thermometer
- ☀ Pain reliever, such as acetaminophen, for headaches/ other aches and pains
- ☀ Sunscreen
- ☀ Anti-diarrhea medication
- ☀ Cough medicine
- ☀ Cold/flu medicine



# Get control of your stress ... and blood sugar

**Y**ou're running late. A deadline is looming at work. Your car just died. All of these things add up to stress. If you have diabetes, stress is more than just an unpleasant occurrence. It can also affect your blood sugar levels.

## The stress effect

When you feel stressed, your body reacts as if it's under attack. Stress causes certain hormones to be released, and in people with diabetes, this can cause glucose to pile up in the blood. The net effect is higher blood glucose levels.

## De-stress

If you can, make changes to sources of ongoing stress. For example, reconcile a bumpy relationship or find a different

way to commute to work. To better cope with sources of stress that you can't change, follow these tips:

- ✦ Relax with deep breathing at least once daily.
- ✦ Try to exercise on most days of the week. Even exercising for as little as 10 minutes a few days a week can be beneficial.
- ✦ Take up a hobby.
- ✦ Seek professional help from a counselor or therapist. ☀

## Diabetes fact

Losing just **5 to 10%** of your body weight can help lower your blood sugar level.

## Diabetes tip

If you have diabetes, you need to see your doctor every three to six months. Your doctor will check your weight, blood pressure and feet. The **MetroPlus DiabetesCare** Case Managers can work with you to figure out ways to reduce future complications and live a better life.

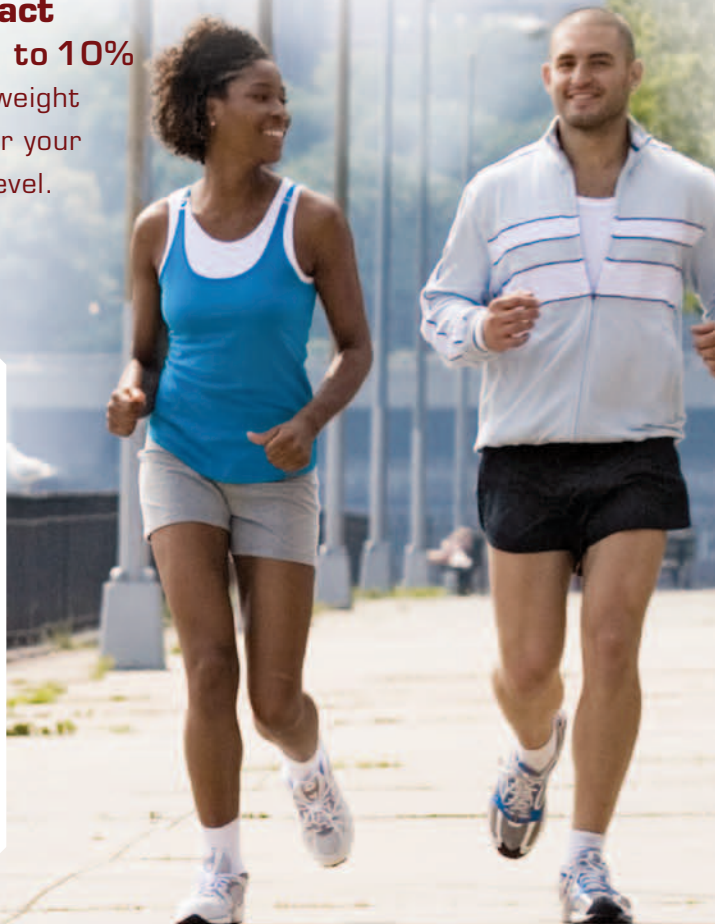
MetroPlus also offers a Telehealth program that provides the latest diabetic monitoring technology in your home and personalized consultations over the phone. For more information, call **1-800-303-9626**.

## Online Diabetes Resource Center offers lots of help

Check out the new HHC Diabetes Wellness Center, [www.nyc.gov/hhcdiabetes](http://www.nyc.gov/hhcdiabetes). (HHC stands for Health & Hospitals Corporation, and is MetroPlus' parent company.) Read about:

- ✦ What causes diabetes and how to manage it
- ✦ Success stories from people with diabetes
- ✦ How to manage stress to help control blood sugar

Download forms to help you track blood sugar, questions to ask your doctor and more.



# Eating for **two**



**E**ating a healthy diet is important in every stage of life. But it's even more important when you are pregnant. Follow these “do’s and don’ts” to safely nourish yourself and your growing baby.

## **THE DO’S ...**

- ✦ Eat a variety of foods from all five basic food groups—grains, veggies, fruit, low-fat dairy and protein (lean beef, poultry, pork, fish, soy, nuts, peas and lentils).
- ✦ Ask your doctor when you should start taking prenatal vitamins.

All women of childbearing age, regardless of whether contemplating pregnancy, should take a multivitamin with at least 400 mg of folic acid. Folic acid helps prevent birth defects, and once you become pregnant, your doctor will recommend prenatal vitamins that contain the nutrients you need for a healthy pregnancy.

- ✦ Eat an average of 300 extra calories each day (the amount in a glass of skim milk and half a sandwich).
- ✦ Aim to gain 25 to 35 pounds during pregnancy if you have a normal weight. Talk with your doctor if you are under or overweight.
- ✦ Drink plenty of water.

## **AND DON'TS ...**

- ✦ Don't eat fish with potentially high levels of mercury such as shark and swordfish. Opt for seafood that is low in mercury, such as shrimp, salmon, canned light tuna (not white albacore) and pollock. You can safely eat up to 12 ounces (two servings) of fish per week.
- ✦ Avoid soft cheeses, unpasteurized milk and processed meats such as hot dogs or deli meat, unless heated to steaming hot. They may have listeria, a bacteria that is harmful to your baby.
- ✦ Don't drink alcohol or more than one cup of coffee per day. ☀

## **Pregnant or a recent new mommy?**

The MetroPlus MetroMom Program can provide the specialty care you need and deserve. For more information about the MetroMom Program and to learn more about gestational diabetes and postpartum depression, call the Care Management Action Line at **1-800-579-9798** or visit us on the Web at **[www.metroplusgold.org](http://www.metroplusgold.org)**.



## Parents: Start the conversation

If you have yet to have this conversation with your child, stop putting it off. If you don't raise the subject kids are likely to talk to friends and get misinformation. Here are some ways for parents to start:

- ✦ Take advantage of teachable moments. Use a news story, movie or TV program to springboard the talk.
- ✦ When your child has a sex-related question, ask what he or she thinks is the answer. See what answers are right or what direction his or her mind is going. Take it from there.
- ✦ Be open about your concerns. Talking about sex does not mean you are encouraging it or giving permission.
- ✦ Share your values.

**Remember:** It's not one conversation. It's a two-person dialogue that starts when kids are young and goes on whenever they ask or you sense information is missing or incorrect.



# Facing the realities of **teen pregnancy**

**P**regnant teens and their babies face higher rates of illness and death. Risk is higher for teen moms because they are more likely to get inadequate care while pregnant, and have unhealthy habits, be single and have low education levels.

Some studies suggest that their immature bodies play a role, too.

The good news is you can help keep your teen from becoming a parent by taking a few key steps:

- ✦ Have age-appropriate chats about sex, relationships and intimacy, starting early in your child's life.
- ✦ Make a point to know where your kids are and what they are doing.
- ✦ Foster your teen's relationships with kids whose families share your values.
- ✦ Discourage steady dating before age 16.
- ✦ Dissuade teen girls from dating boys two or more years older and boys from dating girls that much younger.
- ✦ Develop strong, close relationships with your kids and express your love often. 🌸

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## Visit the Women's Health Portal

All women should have at least one checkup per year with an OB/GYN. We can help you with family planning, prenatal care, children's health, women's health and much more. To learn more, visit [http://www.metroplus.org/health\\_education\\_womens\\_health.php](http://www.metroplus.org/health_education_womens_health.php).

# What can a **headache** tell you?

Everyone has a headache now and then. But did you know that your headache may reveal useful information about your health? Next time a headache strikes, think about it and see what it might be telling you.

## **Headache triggers**

Headaches can be caused by many factors. Take comfort, though, in the fact that they are not usually caused by other health problems. Here are some things your headache might be signaling:

- ✦ You are under stress or feel a mental or emotional conflict.
- ✦ You are working too much and need to slow down.
- ✦ You have forgotten to eat a meal.
- ✦ You are dehydrated.
- ✦ You are not getting enough sleep.
- ✦ You have depression or anxiety.
- ✦ You have sinus or allergy problems.
- ✦ You have muscle tension from jaw clenching, poor posture, etc.
- ✦ You are taking a new medicine.

If your headache triggers aren't clear to you, try keeping a headache journal. Track your mood, amount of sleep, food and drinks consumed, and other factors that can cause headaches. You might find that a pattern emerges.

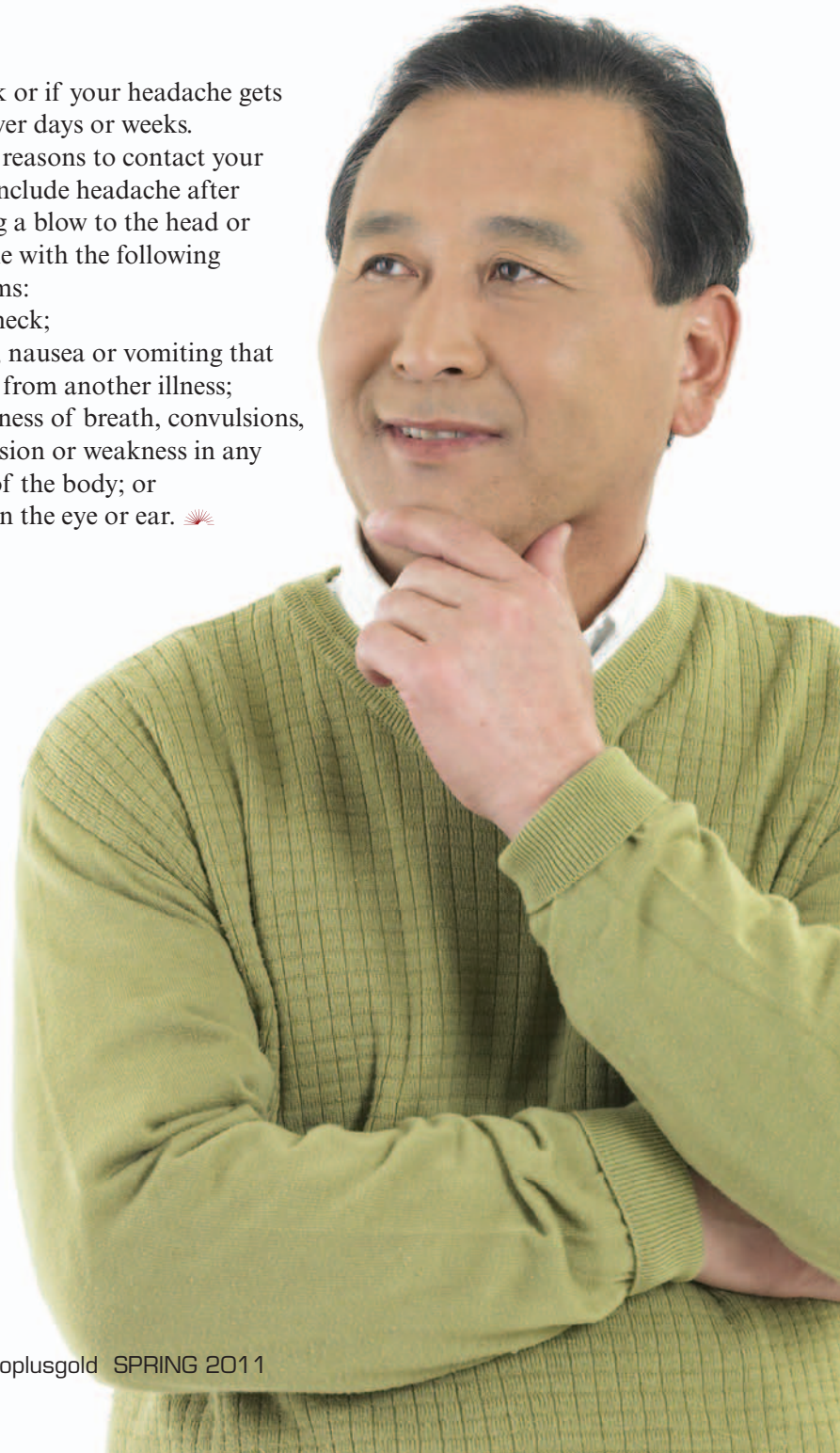
## **When is a headache serious?**

Although rare, headaches can be a symptom of a serious health problem such as a brain tumor or stroke. See your doctor right away if you have two or more headaches

per week or if your headache gets worse over days or weeks.

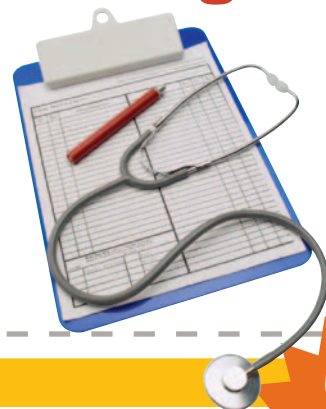
Other reasons to contact your doctor include headache after receiving a blow to the head or headache with the following symptoms:

- ✦ Stiff neck;
- ✦ Fever, nausea or vomiting that is not from another illness;
- ✦ Shortness of breath, convulsions, confusion or weakness in any part of the body; or
- ✦ Pain in the eye or ear. 🌸



# Your guide to **health screenings**

**F**inding illness early when it is easier to treat is one key to good health. But, which screenings should you have and when? Look at this chart and see what's suggested for you. Also talk to your doctor as your screening schedule may be different based on your health, family history and risk factors.



**CLIP AND SAVE!**

Screening Type	Sex	Screening Test	How Often
<b>Blood Pressure</b>	M/F	Blood pressure check	Every year, beginning at age 18
<b>Blood Sugar</b>	M/F	Blood glucose test	Every three years, beginning at age 45
<b>Cholesterol</b>	M/F	Lipoprotein profile	Once every five years, beginning at age 20
<b>Breast Cancer</b>	F	Mammogram	Every year, beginning at age 40 <sup>1</sup>
		Clinical breast examination	Every three years for women in their 20s and 30s; and every year, beginning at age 40 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Cervical Cancer</b>	F	Pap test	Every year, for women ages 21 to 29. Women 30 and older who have had three consecutive negative Pap tests can reduce screening to every three years.
<b>Colorectal Cancer</b>  <i>(One of the tests at right will be done.)</i>	M/F	Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)	Every year, beginning at age 50
		Flexible sigmoidoscopy	Every five years, beginning at age 50
		FOBT and flexible sigmoidoscopy	FOBT every year, sigmoidoscopy every five years, beginning at age 50
		Double contrast barium enema (DCBE)	Every five years, beginning at age 50
		Colonoscopy	Every 10 years, beginning at age 50
<b>Prostate Cancer</b>	M	Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test	Men 50 and older should discuss the advantages and limitations of these two tests each year with their doctors. Men at high risk should have discussions starting at age 45.
		Digital rectal examination	
<b>Skin Cancer</b> (melanoma and nonmelanoma)	M/F	Clinical skin examination as part of a cancer-related checkup	Every three years, from ages 20 to 40; every year, age 40 and older

<sup>1</sup> Currently, the American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends yearly screening for all women ages 40 and older. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) recommends screening every two years for women ages 50 to 74. Women should talk with their doctors about their personal risk factors before making a decision about when to start getting mammograms or how often they should get them.

<sup>2</sup> The ACS recommends annual clinical breast exams (CBEs) for women ages 40 and older. The USPSTF, however, believes there is not enough evidence to assess the value of CBEs for women ages 40 and older. Women should talk with their doctors about their personal risk factors and make a decision about whether they should have a CBE.

## How to contact MetroPlus Gold

At MetroPlus Gold, we want to ensure you get the information you need. Contact Customer Service:

Phone: **1-800-303-9626**

E-mail: [mpgCustomerServices@nychhc.org](mailto:mpgCustomerServices@nychhc.org)

For more information about MetroPlus Gold, visit us online at [www.metroplus.org](http://www.metroplus.org) and click on **MetroPlus Gold**.

## What Makes MetroPlus Gold Special?

- ✦ **No-cost health care.** The basic plan is free for HHC employees, non-Medicare-eligible retirees and their dependents.
- ✦ **No co-pays and no deductibles.** There are no out-of-pocket costs for visits to in-network doctors and covered in-network services.
- ✦ **No paperwork.** There are no bills or claim forms.
- ✦ **Comprehensive benefit package.** Covered benefits include preventive care, well-child care, primary care, maternity care, specialty services, hospital care, emergency care, mental health services, lab services, and care management programs for members with chronic diseases and other health issues.
- ✦ **Extensive provider and hospital network.** MetroPlus has providers in more than 12,000 community-based offices, neighborhood family care sites, medical centers, and hospitals. MetroPlus has agreements with over 20 hospitals in NYC, including HHC's hospitals and Diagnostic & Treatment Centers.
- ✦ **Low cost optional rider for prescription drugs.** Only a \$5 co-pay per prescription for drugs on the MetroPlus formulary. This benefit is available for people who don't have union prescription coverage. 🌟



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### What If a Gold Member Becomes Eligible for Medicare?

If you are employed by HHC, are a MetroPlus Gold member and become eligible for Medicare, you can remain a Gold member. If your spouse or domestic partner is a MetroPlus Gold member and becomes eligible for Medicare, that person can also remain a Gold member.