



metroplusgold

health news

we care for our own



INSIDE

- THE DASH DIET DELIVERS FOR LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE *page 3*
- STRETCHING YOUR GROCERY BUDGET *page 6*
- GET ACTIVE IN FIVE EASY STEPS! *page 7*

What's new in healthcare?

The past decade has ushered in a slew of medical advances, all aimed at improving health and delivery of quality care. Here are four you might come upon soon.

Electronic health records

Say farewell to paper patient charts. At your next healthcare visit, your doctor might opt to store your information on a computer. Electronic health records contain all the same information as your paper file, including your vital signs, vaccine history and medical history. But they can help avoid medical errors because they improve the accuracy and clarity of medical records. They also may help you get the treatment you need faster by making your information more readily available.

MRI breast cancer screening

If you have a family history of breast cancer, talk with your doctor about magnetic resonance



imaging screening (MRI). Although most women undergo mammography for breast cancer screening, MRI has been found to be better than mammography in finding breast tumors in women with a high inherited risk for breast cancer. MRI uses a magnet and radio waves to create a series of detailed images on a computer.

Minimally invasive surgery

From hearts to hips, surgeons today are using minimally

invasive surgical techniques to lessen the burden of surgery on patients. Smaller incisions mean less pain and quicker recovery.

Smart-phone apps

Today's smart-phones make taking care of your health as easy as clicking a button. You can access health information on your phone, get text reminders about upcoming doctor visits, email pics of your dinner to your nutritionist, and even measure your heart rate. 🌻

MetroPlus now making "House Calls"

For MetroPlus Health Plan members with hard-to-control diabetes and congestive heart failure (CHF), the **House Calls** program is here for you. Members get a modem for their homes that's about the size of a book. Blood sugar levels for diabetic members and blood pressure and weight measurements for members with CHF are



monitored daily via your modem by **House Calls** nurses and team members. If a problem is detected, a nurse will call and help get your levels back to normal—helping you to possibly avoid a trip to the hospital.

If you have diabetes or suffer from CHF, let MetroPlus **House Calls** give you peace of mind. To find out more, call MetroPlus Customer Services at **1-866-986-0356**.

For lower blood pressure, the **DASH** diet delivers

If you have high blood pressure, you're not alone. One in three U.S. adults has the condition, which can lead to major health problems like heart disease and stroke. To get on the path to better health, try the DASH Diet. No fancy medicines, special food or complex recipes required.

DASH defined

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan is designed to help you lower your blood pressure. It focuses on foods that are good sources of

minerals, protein and fiber that naturally help reduce blood pressure.

Studies have shown that the DASH Diet can help lower blood pressure in as little as two weeks! The DASH diet can also lower LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, boosting heart health even more.

Getting started

You might not be used to eating a healthy diet. Start slowly by following these tips:

- ✦ Make one change at a time. For instance, switch to low-fat milk or add one serving of fruit or veggies to your meals.

- ✦ Cut back on frozen dinners, canned soups and other processed foods. They are high in sodium.
- ✦ Try making a vegetarian recipe twice a week.
- ✦ Make fruit your go-to snack. 🌻

To order an in-depth booklet on the DASH diet, visit <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/>



A day with DASH

The plan features low amounts of saturated fats and cholesterol. It calls for lots of fruits and vegetables, as well as low- or non-fat milk products. You'll also eat more whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts. Sweets, though, are limited.



A 2,000 calorie per day DASH diet looks like this:

- ✦ 6 to 8 servings of grains
- ✦ 4 to 5 servings of veggies
- ✦ 4 to 5 servings of fruit
- ✦ 2 to 3 servings of fat-free or low-fat milk products
- ✦ up to 6 ounces of lean meat, poultry, and fish
- ✦ 4 to 5 servings of nuts, seeds, and legumes
- ✦ 2 to 3 servings of fat (such as one teaspoon vegetable oil or margarine)
- ✦ up to 5 sweets and foods with added sugar (such as 1 tablespoon sugar or jam, ½ cup sorbet, or 1 cup lemonade) per week

If you need to lose weight, just follow the plan at lower calorie levels and increase your physical activity levels. You should consult with your doctor before beginning any new diet.

Don't let asthma keep you **indoors** this winter

When asthma is controlled, there are no limits to what you can do—even in winter. You can hit the slopes, break out the ice skates, or master the art of a snowball fight. But, to keep asthma controlled, you need to know what triggers it and how to avoid an attack.

Winter triggers

During the winter months, the major culprits to watch out for are cold or dry air and freezing temperatures. These conditions can irritate your airways and lungs. Another major offender is the common cold, as well as other respiratory infections.

Outsmart asthma

You can't change the weather. But a few simple tricks can help you safely enjoy being outside this winter and minimize its effect on you:

- ☀ Cover your nose and mouth with a scarf or use a cold air mask on cold, windy days.
- ☀ Breathe through your nose when being active outside. Your nose will warm and humidify the air.
- ☀ When outside temperatures are extremely cold, move your exercise inside.
- ☀ Limit exercise if you are sick.
- ☀ Make sure to warm-up and cool-down if you're active.



- ☀ Use your short-acting inhaler 15 minutes before you exercise. It will help for up to 4 hours.
- ☀ Carry a quick-relief inhaler with you in case of an asthma attack.

It's also important to know the warning signs of an asthma attack and what to do if you experience them. If you are

unsure about either, talk with your doctor before you break out your skis and snowshoes. ☀

To learn more about asthma:

Visit the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America at www.aafa.org or call the MetroPlus Health Plan at **1-800-579-9798** to find out more about the AsthmaPlus Program.

Do you have an Asthma Action Plan?

The Asthma Action Plan helps you and your child keep asthma under control. It tells you what to do when you or your child have no symptoms, when you or your child have symptoms or in an emergency situation.

All children with asthma should have an Asthma Action Plan.

The Asthma Action Plan must be completed by your doctor. It has three zones: red, yellow and green.

The green zone tells you that your breathing is OK. The yellow zone tells you that you may have asthma symptoms. The red zone is the danger zone. Get help. **Call 911.**

You should also have a peak-flow meter, which measures how well you are breathing. If you do not already have one, ask your doctor for more information.



Mental exercise keeps your mind sharp

If you worry about staying sharp as you age, take heart. Mental function doesn't have to wane as you get older. In fact, research suggests that simple and fun leisure activities that engage your mind can help keep it in good shape.

Use it or lose it

Activities that are intellectually stimulating—such as chess, crossword puzzles, and playing musical instruments and computer games—may play a role in lowering risk for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Elders who engaged in leisure activities that were cognitively demanding, such as playing cards and doing crosswords, were half as likely as those who rarely did them to develop dementia over four years.

Experts suspect that demanding mental activities stimulate the brain in ways that boost "cognitive reserve," which is the ability to compensate for unhealthy brain changes. What's

more, these types of activities can also help relieve stress, anxiety, and depression.

More mind boosts

Just as using your mind is important to stay sharp, so is treating your body well. Other ways to help keep your mind in tip-top shape include these:

- ✦ Be physically active. Some research suggests that exercise can help improve brain function.
- ✦ Limit your alcohol intake. Too much can lead to memory loss and brain damage over time. Stick to a moderate intake—that's up to 1 drink for men, ½ drink for women per day. ✨

Try this Sudoku Puzzle to challenge your brain:

The objective of the game is to fill all the blank squares in a game with the correct numbers:

- ✦ Every row of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order
- ✦ Every column of 9 numbers must include all digits 1 through 9 in any order
- ✦ Every 3 by 3 subsection of the 9 by 9 square must include all digits 1 through 9

	4				8		1	5
						3		
		3	6	1				4
8					9	2	3	7
			3		1	5	9	
		7						
					3	1	2	
	1		2	4			6	

Find the solution on page 6

Stretching your grocery budget

Eating healthfully doesn't have to cost a fortune. In fact, by planning ahead, you can eat well for less. Here's how to stretch your food dollars and keep a healthy diet.

Eating out

Americans like to eat out. But restaurants often serve giant portions and fast foods are usually loaded with fat, salt and sugar. What should you do? Brown-bag your lunch and cook dinner at home whenever you can. When you do decide to go out, set aside half your meal to take home. Doing so will help you to avoid eating too much and will give you an extra meal!

At the market

Before you go to the store, plan your week's meals and make a shopping list. And don't shop hungry. A full belly and a grocery list will help you avoid unhealthy impulse buys. Follow these tips when you are shopping:

- * **Stock-up** on healthy pantry staples such as beans, brown rice, pasta, oatmeal and barley. Barley and brown rice are great sources of fiber and can be used to stretch soups, stews and casseroles. Beans provide protein and fiber and are great with salads and pasta.
- * **Buy what's in season.** Fruits and veggies taste better and cost less when in season.
- * **Check the frozen vegetable section for sales**

and fill your freezer with them. Frozen foods last longer than fresh ones and are just as nutritious.

- * **Pay with cash.**

A recent study found that shoppers who paid with plastic spent more and had more unhealthy, impulse buys than their cash-carrying counterparts.

In the kitchen

Make friends with your kitchen and your taste buds, wallet and waist line will

thank you. Here are some ideas for the budding cook:

- * **Make soups** with lots of veggies. Packed with nutrients and low in calories, homemade soups are quick and inexpensive.
- * **Double your recipes** and freeze half of what you make. Make sure to put the extras in microwave-safe containers for quick and easy reheating.
- * **Substitute meat** with healthier and less costly sources of protein such as fish, tofu, beans and lentils.
- * **Plant a vegetable garden.** Not only will you harvest cheap, delicious food, but you'll be active doing it. 🌻

Not used to cooking?

Don't worry. Healthy recipes abound on-line. Visit http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/recipes.html to get started.

Sudoku Solution from page 5

3	6	7	5	4	2	8	1	9
9	2	1	3	7	8	5	6	4
8	5	4	6	9	1	7	2	3
6	9	5	1	8	3	4	7	2
7	3	2	9	6	4	1	5	8
1	4	8	7	2	5	9	3	6
4	7	9	1	2	6	3	8	5
2	8	3	4	5	7	6	9	1
5	1	6	8	3	9	2	4	7



Are you **exercising enough?**

If you are like most U.S. adults, you don't get enough physical activity. But, becoming active is easier than you might think.

There are two types of physical activity that you should strive to do every week. For one, you should try to get at least 150 minutes of aerobic activity each week. This type of activity gets your heart pumping. Dancing and brisk walking are great options. And spurts of as little as ten minutes count toward your goal!

In addition to aerobic activity, you should do exercise twice a week that strengthens your muscles. Lifting weights, working with resistance bands and even good old push-ups and sit-ups are good examples.

Be sure to talk with your doctor before you start an exercise program if you have a chronic health condition such as arthritis, diabetes or heart disease. Your doctor can help you choose activities that match your abilities. 🌻



Get active in **5** easy steps

Don't fret if you can't remember the last time you exercised. Getting started is easy. These five steps will help get you go from inactive to active in a flash:

- 1.** Choose an activity that you like and that you are able to do. Biking is a great option.
- 2.** Find a time that works for your schedule and put it in your calendar.
- 3.** Start with 10-minute chunks of activity a couple times per week. Bump up your time by five minutes every few weeks or months.
- 4.** Team up with a friend to keep you motivated.
- 5.** Track your time and progress to help you stay on course.

Give yourself a mood boost

It doesn't seem possible, but exercise does more than help control weight, boost bone and muscle strength, increase odds of living longer and lower risk for heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers. It also improves mental health. In fact, people who exercise regularly have higher self-esteem and more

positive moods than those who are inactive. Regular physical activity can also lower risk for depression, as well as treat it. Need more benefits? It can also help with anxiety symptoms, aid sleep and keep your mind sharp as you age.

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

For more information about MetroPlus Gold, visit us online at www.metroplus.org and click on **MetroPlus Gold**.



Mari S. Gold
Editor

Lauren Small
Assistant Editor

©2011. Articles in this newsletter are written by professional journalists or physicians who strive to present reliable, up-to-date health information. But no publication can replace the care and advice of medical professionals, and readers are cautioned to seek such help for personal problems. Models used for illustrative purposes only. (10153M)

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. ☀

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.