

health letter[®]

www.metroplus.org

Spring 2008



Walking for Your Health

→ YOU CAN GET BIG HEALTH BENEFITS FROM THIS SIMPLE FORM OF EXERCISE.

Walking is an easy form of exercise that packs powerful health benefits. Walking helps control blood pressure, which lowers the chance of a heart attack or stroke. It raises the “good cholesterol” and lowers the “bad cholesterol” in your blood. Walking makes bones and muscles stronger. It may also improve your sleep and lower stress levels. Regular walking can even help you lose weight.


All you need to walk is a pair of comfortable shoes with good support. Start by walking for ten minutes a day. Set a goal like walking to a nearby park or the grocery store. After a few days,

increase your walk to fifteen minutes. Keep adding time until you walk about 30 minutes. It's best if you walk almost every day, but walking for even a few days a week is good for you.

After you have a walking pattern, try moving faster. Build up to a brisk pace. This means a faster gait than your normal walking pace, but you should still be able to talk comfortably.

Many people find they walk more often with a walking buddy. Alone or with a friend, try different routes to make it fun.

For better lifelong health, get in the walking habit.

 **Having a 65th Birthday?** Are you turning 65? Remember that MetroPlus now offers several Medicare programs. Please call 1-800-303-9626 for more information. You may be able to change from your current health insurance to Medicare very easily.

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160 Water St., 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10038
Phone: 1-800-303-9626
www.metroplus.org

DO YOU HAVE A HEARING PROBLEM? If so, use a TTY machine to call Customer Services: **1-800-881-2812.**

ARE YOUR KIDS GOING TO CAMP? They need a checkup! Make the appointment *now*. Remember, every family member needs a complete physical exam once a year.

DID YOU MOVE? Do you have a new phone number? If so, please call Customer Services: **1-800-303-9626.**



Diabetes and Depression May Be Linked



→Diabetes is hard to live with. You have to adjust your life around your condition. You need to eat right and keep track of your blood sugar. The ongoing issues make some people depressed.

New studies find that simply having diabetes may increase the risk of depression. As you feel worse, you don't manage your diabetes as well as you did before. Your health suffers. This makes you more depressed.

If you have diabetes, get screened for depression. If necessary, you will be referred to a mental health specialist for help. During your visit, be sure to mention that you have diabetes. Some medications make diabetes worse by raising the level of sugar in your blood. There are other medication choices.

Depression colors your life and makes it hard to cope. Some signs of depression are:

- Feeling sad for a prolonged period of time.
- Feeling hopeless or helpless.
- Having trouble remembering things.
- Taking no interest in activities you used to enjoy.
- Not sleeping well or sleeping too much.
- Having thoughts of suicide.

If any of these apply to you, tell your doctor right away. Your life—and your diabetes—can change for the better.

Free Education and Training at MEOC

→The Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) offers day and evening programs. You can train as a Certified Nurse's Assistant or Microsoft Office Specialist, or you can learn computer repair. MEOC has courses in ESL, GED and College Prep and offers help finding jobs.

If you meet New York State's low-income level, you may be eligible. Call **(212) 961-4400** or visit www.man.eoc.suny.edu.



stop the spread of illness



By Joseph Masci, M.D.,
Chief of Medicine,
Elmhurst Hospital Center
→ In today's world,
infectious diseases—from TB

to the common cold—can spread fast. There are ways you can help stop them from spreading. Practice these habits yourself and teach them to your family:

1. Wash your hands well and often. Scrub your fingers, the back and front of each hand and your wrists. Use regular soap and warm water. Wash for as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday to You" twice. Wash your hands after using the bathroom and changing a diaper and before eating or fixing food.

2. When you are sick, you may not need an antibiotic. Colds, the flu and many sore throats are caused by viruses. Antibiotics do not work on these illnesses.

3. If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, take it just as you are told. Take the entire dose.

4. Keep all your immunizations up-to-date. Be sure your kids get all their shots on time.

5. Don't send children to day care or school if they are sick. A child with a fever or diarrhea should stay home.

6. If you have sex, protect yourself against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV. Use a new, latex condom *each time* you have sex.

7. Don't use IV drugs. If you do, never share needles.

8. Keep your personal items personal. Don't share razor blades, toothbrushes or hairbrushes. Don't drink or eat using someone else's plate, glass or silverware.

9. Keep fish, meat and poultry separate from other foods. Wash cutting boards and knives in hot, soapy water after each use. Wash your hands after you touch food.

10. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.



Postpartum Depression

→ Having a baby is wonderful. It can also be stressful. After the birth, some women are scared or confused. Usually these feelings go away. When the feelings stay, you may have postpartum depression (PPD).

PPD can begin a few days or even months after your baby is born. PPD keeps you from living your daily life. Some signs of PPD are:

- Having no energy.
- Feeling sad or crying a lot.
- Not wanting to eat or overeating.
- Not caring about the baby.
- Fear of hurting the baby or yourself.

If you think you have PPD, talk to your doctor right away. Don't be shy. PPD can be treated.

To find out more, you can call the National Women's Health Information Center:
1-800-994-9662.



TEENAGERS:

Why You Need a Checkup Every Year

→ **Teen bodies change a lot**, so you need a PCP visit *every* year.

A complete exam for a teenager includes measuring height, weight and body mass, and certain blood tests. The doctor examines your heart, lungs and other body parts to be sure everything is OK. If you are overweight, your doctor can help with a plan to slim down. If you don't weigh enough, your doctor can help, too.

You need immunizations to protect you from certain illnesses. What you need depends on other vaccines you have had in the past and your health history. Teenage girls should get the new HPV vaccine.

Besides the physical exam, you and your doctor should talk about:

- Sex and how to keep yourself safe.

- Healthy eating habits.
- How smoking, drinking alcohol and using street drugs can hurt you.
- Feelings. If you feel sad often or ever think about killing yourself, speak up.

Don't be shy about dealing with topics you might not want to discuss at home. Your doctor has heard everything before.

Most teens grow and develop as they should. But, if anything isn't as it should be, it is best to find out and take care of it early.

Make an appointment for your checkup. Or, call Customer Services: **1-800-303-9626** for help. A yearly checkup is one of the most important things a teen can do to stay healthy.



Help with Mental Health

Are you depressed or anxious all the time? Do you eat and then make yourself vomit? Do you think about killing yourself? Talk to your PCP. MetroPlus can also help. Call us: **1-800-303-9626**. Or, call our behavioral health case manager: **(212) 908-8585**. Anyone can have a mental health problem. Don't let it ruin your life.

MetroPlus Welcomes New Hospitals to Our Network

MetroPlus welcomes Continuum Health Partners to its network. As of April 1, 2008, MetroPlus will add four hospitals: **Beth Israel Medical Center Petrie Division**, Manhattan and **Kings Highway Division**, Brooklyn; **Long Island College Hospital**, Brooklyn; and **New York Eye and Ear Infirmary**, Manhattan. This arrangement also adds over 500 providers—both PCPs and specialists. MetroPlus expects to add a fifth Continuum hospital, **St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital**, in Manhattan, in the very near future.

Shape Up New York

There are free fitness programs and activities for the whole family all over New York City. To see the list by borough, go to www.nycgovparks.org/sub_things_to_do/programs/shape_up_ny/shape_up_ny.html, or call **(212) 360-3300**.

MANDATED BENEFITS NOTICE

→ATTENTION METROPLUS MEMBERS

MetroPlus Health Plan wants to be sure that you are aware of your rights to receive the services listed below as part of your MetroPlus health coverage.

■ **Cancer Care Second Opinion.** For the diagnosis of cancer, recurrence of cancer or a recommendation regarding cancer treatment, MetroPlus will pay for a second opinion from a participating cancer specialist, including one affiliated with a participating specialty cancer center. If MetroPlus does not have a provider in its network qualified to treat your specific type of cancer, then we will provide you with a referral to an appropriate nonparticipating provider.

■ **Hospital Care With Breast Cancer Surgery.** If you need a lumpectomy, lymph-node dissection or mastectomy, MetroPlus will pay for in-hospital care for as long as your doctor decides it is necessary, after discussing it with you.

■ **Breast Reconstruction Following a Mastectomy.** If you have a mastectomy, MetroPlus will pay for reconstructive surgery on either or both breasts in the manner you or your doctor deem appropriate.

■ **Mastectomy-Related Services.** If you have a mastectomy, MetroPlus provides benefits for mastectomy-related services, including

reconstruction and surgery to achieve symmetry between the breasts, prostheses and treatment of complications resulting from mastectomy (including lymphedema).

■ **Direct Access to Obstetric and Gynecologic Services.** You can self-refer (without a referral from your PCP) for care from an in-network obstetrician or gynecologist in the following situations: for at least two routine exams annually; for care and services related to pregnancy; and, for care as a result of annual examinations and/or for care of an acute gynecologic condition.

If you have questions about these benefits or any other aspect of your MetroPlus coverage, please call MetroPlus Customer Services at **1-800-303-9626**.