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Winter 2006



health letter[®]

JOIN US

The Member Advisory Committee Works for You

The MetroPlus Member Advisory Committee (MAC) at a working lunch meeting at 160 Water St., MetroPlus headquarters. Left to right: Tamira Boynes; Margaret

Fraizer; Barbara Radin, MetroPlus CEO; Linda Cummings, MetroPlus Director of Utilization Management; Maria Rivera, MetroPlus Customer Services Manager; Larry Bishop; Margo Bishop; Calvin Dalton; Bess Stephensen; Nella Lewis; Mari Gold, MetroPlus Director of Communications; Shawndesse Kancso, MetroPlus Project Manager; Lavern Williams, MetroPlus Administrative Clerk; Anita Singleton; Jacqueline Brathwaite; Gail Smith,

MetroPlus Deputy Executive Director; Annmarie Millien; Rebecca Santana, MetroPlus Director of Customer Services; Arnold Saperstein, MetroPlus Chief Medical Officer.

The Committee heard Plan news and gave us ideas for future newsletter articles and agenda items for upcoming meetings. Some members will take part in upcoming focus groups. If you would like to join MAC, call Member Services at **1-800-303-9626**.



Illustrations by Brie Spangler

MetroPlus Is #1!

MetroPlus was named the number one plan overall in quality and member satisfaction according to the "2005 Consumer's Guide to Medicaid Managed Care," recently released by the New York State Department of Health.

Reminders

- If you have a hearing problem, use a TDD machine to call Member Services at **1-800-881-2812**.
- Everyone needs a baseline checkup each year. Call to make your appointment today.
- MetroPlus Members: Don't Lose Your Health Care Coverage. Medicaid, Family Health Plus, and CHP B members: When you get your packet in the mail, call MetroPlus Member Services. We will help you recertify/renew. For help with Medicaid/FHP/CHP B, call **1-800-303-9626**.

Free Help With Your Taxes

If you qualify, you can get free help to file your taxes. Money Central tax sites are open January 18 through April 15, 2006. To find a site near you, call **1-866-924-3758**. If you file, you may be able to get a special tax credit.

You need to bring certain documents with you when you go. Ask what you need when you call. Or, visit www.cfrnyc.org. It's your money. Come and get it!

PROTECT YOURSELF

Living With HIV

Today, people with HIV can live longer, healthier lives. This is partly due to new medicines that work well, have fewer side effects, and are easier to take.

It is important to know your HIV status. If you are negative, you can take steps to stay that way. If you learn that you are positive, you can start getting care right away. The earlier you find out you have HIV, the better your health will be.

Many doctors and clinics now use rapid HIV testing. This takes only 20 minutes, so you get results on the spot.

Of course, preventing HIV is always better than treating it. Don't assume a new sex partner is negative. Use a new, latex condom (men) or female condom (women) every time you have sex. Never share a needle, toothbrush, or razor blade.

Members of MetroPlus Partnership



in Care, the program for people with HIV or AIDS, get top quality care. They can have an HIV specialist as their PCP, a case manager, counseling, and other help.

Remember: Know your HIV status. Get tested. Practice safe sex. For more information on Partnership in Care, call **1-800-475-METRO**.

Dr. Shah is Associate Medical Director of the MetroPlus Partnership in Care, the program for people living with HIV and their families.

CARING FOR YOU

MetroPlus Program For HIV+ Members

If you are an HIV positive MetroPlus member, you may be able to join our Partnership in Care program. This program takes extra special care of you. Members can get:

- An HIV specialist as their PCP.
- Faster referrals for specialty care.
- Someone at the Plan to make appointments and help you get the most from MetroPlus.
- Help exploring your family and community support systems. If needed, we can find other support for you.

To learn if you are eligible for Partnership in Care, call **1-800-475-METRO**.

GET HELP

Do You Feel “Down”?

Have you lost interest in activities you usually enjoy? Do you feel sad or helpless? Do you cry a lot? Are you always tired? Is it hard to concentrate? Do you have more bad days than good ones?

If most of your answers are “yes,” you may be depressed. Depression is a common illness like diabetes or high blood pressure. If you feel “down” most of the time for two weeks, tell your PCP. You may be referred to a specialist who can help. Or, you can self-refer to a mental health professional.

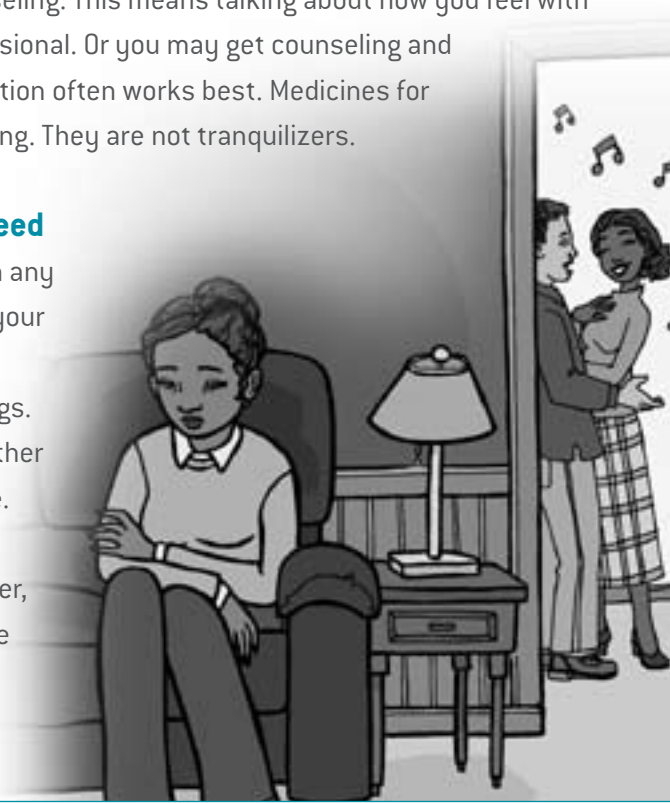
Treating Depression

You may decide to get counseling. This means talking about how you feel with a trained mental health professional. Or you may get counseling and take medication. This combination often works best. Medicines for depression are not habit forming. They are not tranquilizers.

Help Your Treatment Succeed

- If you note side effects from any medicine, mention them to your doctor right away.
- Avoid alcohol and street drugs.
- Tell your doctor about any other medicines or herbs you take.
- Keep all your appointments.
- Even if you start to feel better, keep taking the medicine the way you were told.

Depression can be treated.
Don't despair: Get help.



Help at Your Health Care Site

The new Network Relations staff at MetroPlus sites helps Plan members solve many problems. If you need help and can't locate Network Relations, go to the Managed Care Office. It is usually on the ground floor. The security guards can direct you.

Maybe you need help to make an appointment with a specialist. Or you lost your ID card. Perhaps you want to change your PCP. Talk to someone at Network Relations or visit the Managed Care Office. MetroPlus wants to make your health plan work for you.

Medicaid Members:

Is Your ID Card Correct?
Please check your card. Look at these items:

- Name: Is it spelled right?
- Birth date: Is it correct?
- Gender: M means “male.”
F means “female.”

It is important that your card is correct. If anything is wrong on your card, please call Member Services at **1-800-303-9626** now.

A HEALTHY START

Are You Having a Baby?

Congratulations! MetroPlus wants to help you and your baby have the best start possible.

Our **MetroMom** program can help in many ways. When you join **MetroMom** you get:

- A calendar that guides you through your pregnancy.
- Useful information about what to expect in the coming

months, baby care, and more.

- Special help for high-risk moms and babies.
- A gift for your new baby.

If you are pregnant, please call us now at **1-800-475-METRO (6387)**. Tell us you want to join **MetroMom**.

We will do everything we can for you and your baby.



TREAT THE PAIN

What Is Chronic Sinus?

Sinus cavities are the open spaces in the bones of your face around your nose. If these spaces get sore and swollen, you have a sinus problem. If the problem lasts for several months or if it comes and goes, you may have chronic (ongoing) sinus. You should see your doctor.

Although most chronic sinus does not involve a fever, it can make you feel bad. Sinus can cause an ache behind your eyes and make it hard to breathe through your nose. Sometimes you get a headache or pain in your upper jaw and teeth.

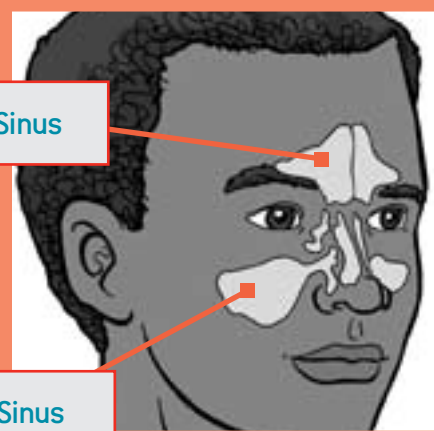
Chronic sinus is hard to diagnose because it can seem like a cold or an allergy. Sometimes the doctor prescribes medicine that can help. These ideas may make you feel better too:

- Don't bend over with your head down. This can make the pain worse.
- Put warm packs on your face where it hurts.
- Use a humidifier or get into a warm shower and breathe deeply.
- Drink lots of water.

Ask your doctor for other ideas. He or she wants you to feel better as much as you do.



Upper Sinus



Lower Sinus

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