

# HEALTH letter<sup>®</sup>

You're #1 with us!



## BREATHE EASY

Asthma is a breathing disease. It causes your airways to narrow. This leads to wheezing, shortness of breath and coughing.

The things that cause an asthma attack are called triggers. Common triggers are cigarette smoke, exercise and cold weather. Some people with asthma have allergic asthma. This means their asthma is triggered by allergens.

Some allergens, like pet dander, are around all year. Others get worse in spring and summer. Pollen is a common springtime allergen. If you think you have allergic asthma, talk to your doctor. A test can confirm it. Tests can also show what you are allergic to.

Work with your doctor to make an asthma action plan. This may include avoiding your triggers. Your doctor may suggest allergy shots or medicine.



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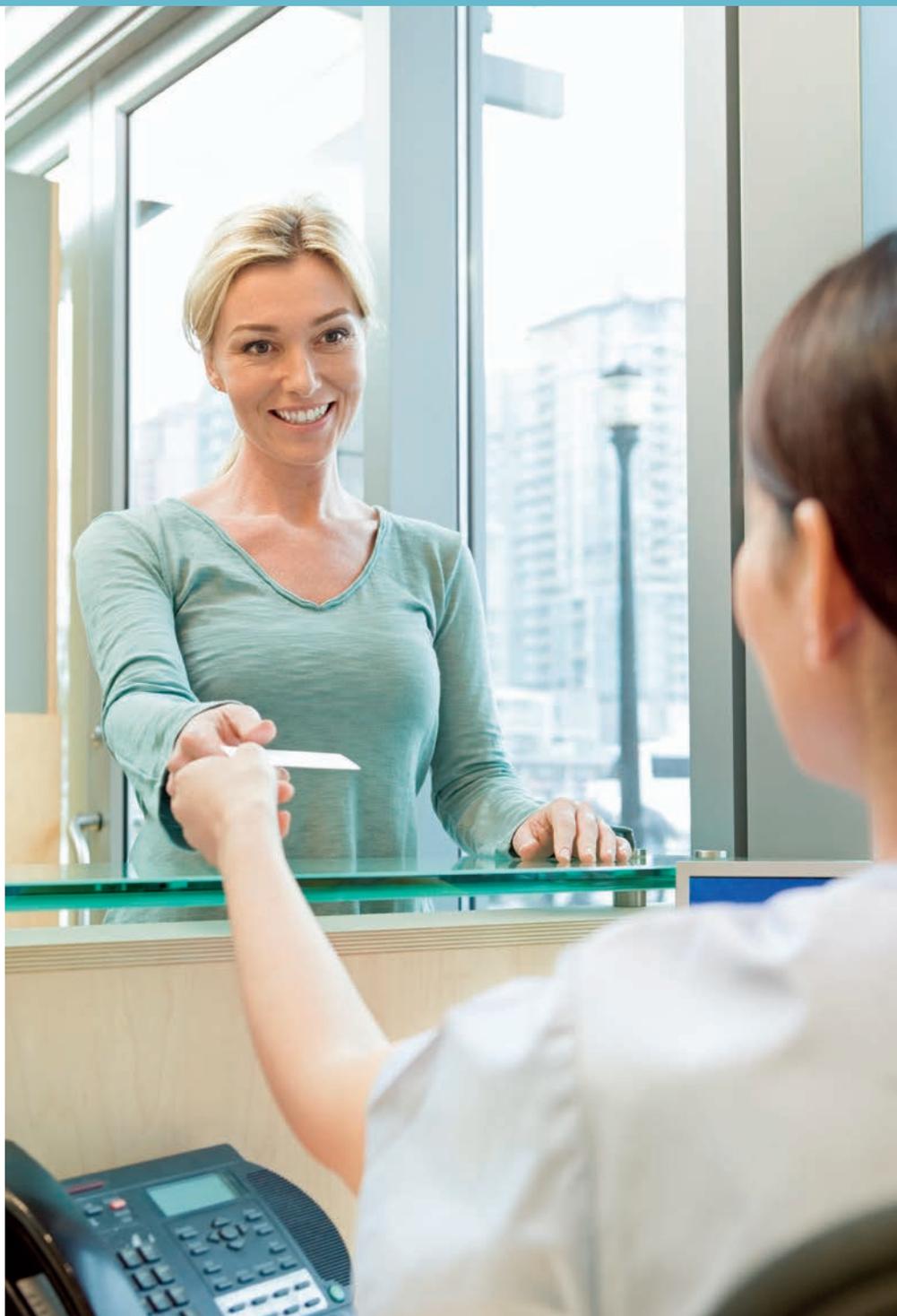
MEN

# HOW MEMBER SERVICES CAN HELP

- To get a copy of our list of providers, call Member Services.
- We can help you make appointments or find a doctor. Call **1.800.303.9626**.
- Don't miss out on important information. If you move or change phone numbers, tell us. Call **1.800.303.9626**.
- Do you have trouble hearing? Then use our TTY/TDD number. Call **1.800.881.2812**.
- If you are turning 65 soon, it is time to learn about MetroPlus Medicare. Call **1.866.986.0356**.

## We're Listening!

Health plan members met with MetroPlus staff earlier this year to discuss ways to improve our plan. From left to right are: (bottom) Nella Lewis, Wayne Hobbins, Tamira Boynes, O'Daniel Buchanan, Marva Boxill; (second row) Meryl Weinberg, Evelyn Corcino, Kathryn Soman, Gail L. Smith, Rebecca Santana, Shalette Washington; (third row) Jonathan Weiss, Dr. Glendon Henry, Dr. Saperstein, Israel Romano. Learn more about our Member Advisory Committee at [metroplus.org/mac](http://metroplus.org/mac).



# LIVING WITH CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE

Congestive heart failure (CHF) means your heart doesn't pump as well as it should. It is still working, but it does not get enough oxygen to your body. Signs of CHF include trouble breathing, tiredness and dizziness. Heart disease, high blood pressure and having a heart attack can put you at risk for heart failure.

Having heart failure can be hard, but you can still live a full life. The American Heart Association says people living with heart failure should:

## 1. Note any changes in symptoms.

Do you have a new symptom? Did an old symptom get suddenly worse? Call your doctor right away. Watch for quick weight gain, shortness of breath, swelling in the legs or ankles, trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, tiredness or a frequent, dry cough.

## 2. Work with doctors.

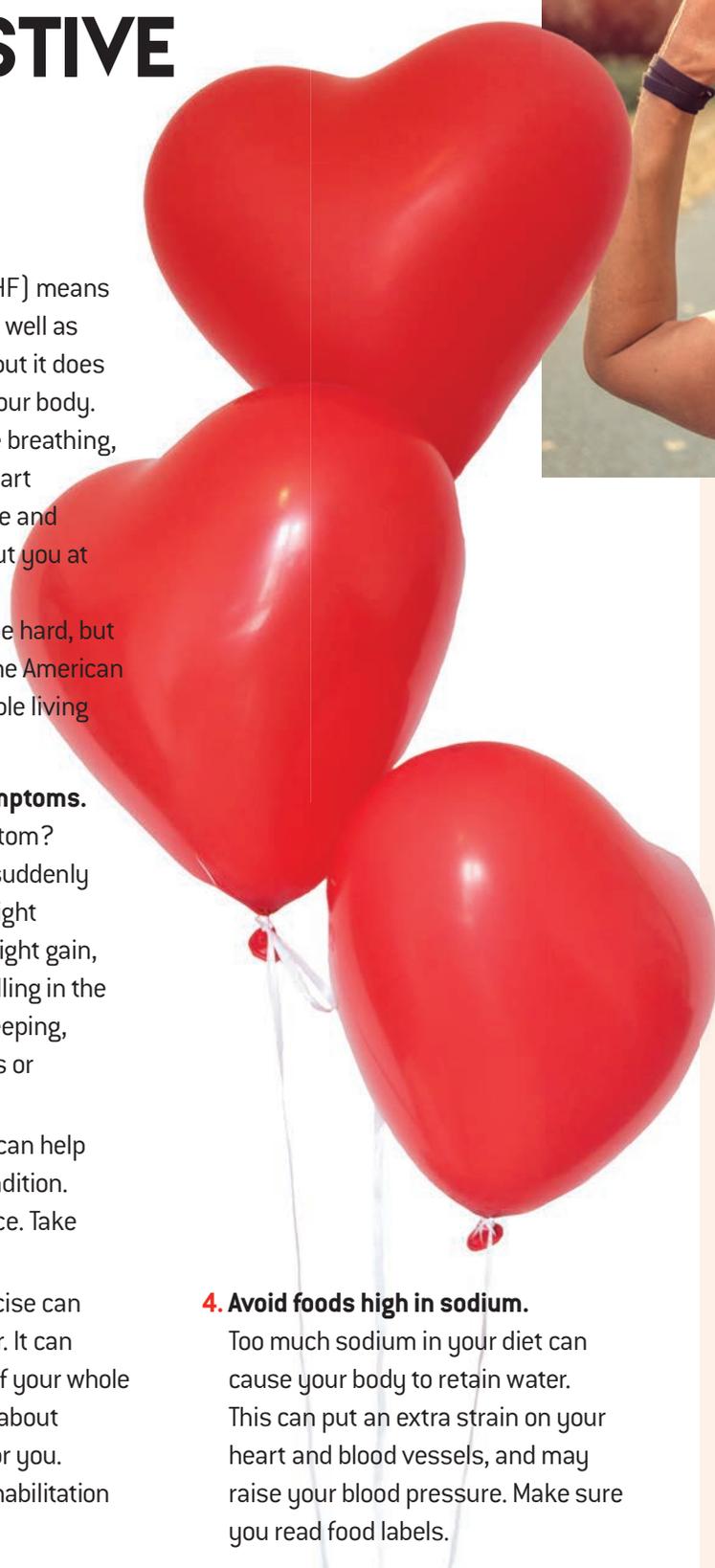
They can help watch and treat your condition. Follow your doctor's advice. Take medications as directed.

## 3. Get some exercise.

Exercise can make your heart stronger. It can also improve the health of your whole body. Talk to your doctor about exercises that are right for you. Ask whether a cardiac rehabilitation program could help.

## 4. Avoid foods high in sodium.

Too much sodium in your diet can cause your body to retain water. This can put an extra strain on your heart and blood vessels, and may raise your blood pressure. Make sure you read food labels.



## Help Your Heart

High blood pressure may have no warning signs or symptoms. But if it is left untreated, it can lead to a heart attack, stroke and heart failure. If you have high blood pressure, there are steps you can take to help your heart:

- Take your blood pressure medication regularly.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet. Limit salt, sugar and fat. Include plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Get regular exercise.
- Control your stress.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Quit smoking.
- Monitor your blood pressure. See your doctor regularly. You can also check your pressure at a local clinic or pharmacy or at home.



## WANT TO QUIT? WE CAN HELP.

If you are a smoker, quitting is one of the best things you can do for your health. It can be hard to kick the habit. If you are ready to stop smoking, you can get help.

**Talk to your doctor.** He or she may be able to give you advice on how to quit. Or your doctor may suggest nicotine replacement or medicine that can help.

**Call a hotline.** The NYS Smokers Quitline (**1.866.697.8487**) offers coaching over the phone. You can also get a starter kit of nicotine patches.

**Find online help.** The Quitline is online at **nysmokefree.com**. Or you can look for tips and tools at **smokefree.gov**.

**Call your health plan.** MetroPlus Health Plan has a care management program to help smokers quit. Call **1.800.475.METRO** to talk to Member Services to find out more.

## Get Checked

Cervical cancer is a common cancer for women. It is easy to detect. See your doctor regularly to help catch it early. These tests look for cervical cancer:

- A Pap test looks for abnormal cells in the cervix. These cells could be cancerous or precancerous.
- The HPV test looks for a common virus. HPV is caught through skin-to-skin contact with an infected person. HPV is the main cause of cervical cancer.

If you are 21 or older or if you are sexually active, you should be screened for cervical cancer. Most women have a Pap test every three years. Some women may need one more often. Talk to your doctor.

## HELP FOR DIABETES

Do you have diabetes? It's important to manage your disease. Left untreated, diabetes can lead to long-term problems. It can affect your vision or kidneys. It can also lead to heart attack or stroke. Some diabetics lose limbs.

You should see your doctor every three to six months. Your doctor will help you control your blood sugar. It's important to take your medication as directed. You may also need to test yourself at home.

### Important tests for diabetics include:

- **Hemoglobin A1c test:** Once every six months. This test checks your average blood sugar levels.
- **A foot exam:** Once a year. This exam checks for infections, sores and loss of feeling.
- **Urine test:** Once a year. This test checks for signs of kidney damage.
- **Cholesterol test:** Once a year. This test checks for high levels of cholesterol and triglycerides.
- **An eye exam:** Once every two years. This exam looks for diabetes-related vision problems.



## Connect With Us

- Talk to Member Services: **1.800.303.9626** (Monday to Saturday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.).
- Visit our website: **metroplus.org**.
- Get the latest news on Facebook: **facebook.com/MetroPlusHealth**.