

HEALTH MATTERS

A Newsletter for EmblemHealth, GHI and HIP Members

Spring 2011

LET'S TALK HEALTH CARE



IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Spotlighting Our Shining Stars
- 4 Do You Know Cardio?
- 6 Your Health Routine
- 7 Quick Tips for Talking With Your Doctor

Dispose of Medications Safely

Follow these guidelines to protect yourself and your family.

Have you looked in the back of your medicine cabinet lately? Chances are, if you do, you'll find expired cough medicine or prescription pills you no longer need. It's tempting to simply toss these in the trash, but that's not usually the best way to get rid of medication. By following these drug disposal guidelines from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), you'll protect the environment and the people around you.

First, make sure to follow disposal instructions on the prescription label. Do not flush prescription medicine down the toilet unless the label specifically says to do this.

If there are no instructions on the prescription label, take these steps before putting medication in the household trash.

- Take the medicine out of the original container.
- Place medicine in a sealable bag or can and mix the medicine with an unappealing substance, such as dirt, cat litter or coffee grounds.

By doing this, you'll protect children and pets from accidentally ingesting the medication. You'll also make the discarded medicine less appealing to anyone who might sift through your garbage.

The FDA suggests using community drug take-back programs, which allow people to drop off old prescriptions at a central location for proper disposal. Contact your local trash and recycling center to find out if such a program exists near you.

Check disposal instructions for over-the-counter medicine, too. Even if you can throw this medicine away, ensure that children and pets cannot get to it. Remove discarded medication from your home immediately.

Here are some other useful tips from the FDA:

- Scratch out identifying information on prescription bottles before throwing them out.
- Do not give your prescription medicine to friends. The medication is for your own treatment and could be dangerous for someone else.
- When in doubt about proper drug disposal, ask your pharmacist.



Health Reform & You: News You Can Use Now

○dds are you're confused about health reform. We'll continue to help you sort it out here and online at www.emblemhealthreform.com. There's reason to smile because of changes that took place in 2010 — and those coming in 2011. For example: People without insurance who have pre-existing medical conditions now have a more affordable option for

health coverage. The New York Bridge Plan is specifically for those who live in New York State, are legal U.S. residents, have a medical condition and have been without insurance for at least six months. It's a great way to get benefits at a time when they are most needed. To find out more, call **1-877-444-9622** or visit www.nybridgeplan.com.



SAVE MONEY With **Online Coupons**

EmblemHealth offers coupons for leading brand products and services that can help you and your family save money and stay healthy. The coupons may be used at supermarkets, drugstores and other retailers nationwide.

► **Go to your plan's Web site, log in and click the coupon icon on the left side of the page. Or, call your plan's Customer Service number (shown on the back page of this newsletter) to request that coupons be mailed to you. New coupons are added regularly.**



ARE YOU READY TO QUIT SMOKING?

Our Tobacco-Free PATH program is available to you at no cost. To join, call **1-866-611-7848** (TDD **1-877-777-6534**) 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

GHI Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HEREIU) and City of New York (employees and retirees) should call the New York State Quitline at **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487). If you live outside New York State, call the National Quitline at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** (1-800-784-8669).

Spotlighting Our Shining Stars

EmblemHealth would like to congratulate and thank **Faye McDew** from Queens-Long Island Medical Group in North Babylon and **Marlene McIntyre** from the Cambria Heights Medical Group in Cambria Heights for the exceptional service they provide to our members. Here are comments from letters sent to us about Ms. McDew and Ms. McIntyre:

S.D. of Dix Hills, New York, writes, “Faye treats everyone with empathy. She patiently works with each person as if they are her only patient. Faye takes the time to make each of us feel special and important. She understands the pain we as patients endure and tries to make each visit a happy and rewarding time. This is why she is a Shining Star!”

S.M. of Queens Village, New York, writes: “I would like to commend Marlene for her outstanding ability, understanding and accuracy. She patiently and painlessly assists the patients who come to the office. Marlene has great skills with drawing blood. She always puts you at ease in a stressful situation. For this reason, I would like to see Marlene made a Shining Star.”

Thank you Faye McDew and Marlene McIntyre! To recognize these Shining Stars for their caring and superior service, they have each been awarded a \$100 gift card.



Tell Us About Your Shining Star

Is there a staff member in your EmblemHealth, GHI or HIP network doctor's office whom you'd like to acknowledge? Tell us about him or her! Mail your thoughts to:

EmblemHealth
Attn: John McConnell
55 Water Street, Sixth Floor
New York, NY 10041-8190

Or e-mail providercomm@emblemhealth.com. Include your name, member ID number, address and daytime phone number. Your letter may be edited for clarity.

The Doctor Will See You Now

Doctors are required to provide you with urgent and routine care in a timely manner. For urgent care, you can expect to be seen within 24 hours of calling your doctor for an appointment. For sick visits that are not urgent, appointments are scheduled within 48 to 72 hours of calling your doctor. For routine medical care, you may expect an appointment within four weeks. For routine mental health care or substance abuse concerns, appointments must be available within five business days of your request.



STAY ON TOP OF SCREENINGS

Are you due for a cancer screening? Keep in mind that early detection of colon, cervical and breast cancer leads to more effective, and often more successful, treatment.

Men and women ages 50 or older should be screened for colon cancer. Screening methods include colonoscopy, fecal occult blood test and sigmoidoscopy. Ask your doctor about your cancer risk and the best screening method for you.

Women ages 40 and older should have a mammogram every one to two years, according to the National Cancer Institute. Women also need a Pap test, which detects cervical cancer, every one to three years.

Note: Women do not need a referral to visit an OB/GYN, so arrange needed testing and your annual covered visit today.

Do You Know Cardio?

These 7 tips help your heart.



Your heart is one hard-working organ. In fact, the human heart beats about 100,000 times a day and 35 million times a year. While your heart never takes a break, you can make its work a little easier by understanding how to prevent and treat heart disease.

First, let's talk prevention. There are seven ways to improve heart health on an everyday basis, according to the American Heart Association (AHA).

1. **Get moving.** Exercising for just 30 minutes a day reduces your heart disease risk. Regular physical activity lowers blood pressure, increases beneficial HDL cholesterol in your blood and prevents weight gain. The AHA recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise a week. To be safe, check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.
2. **Control cholesterol.** After a simple blood test, you'll learn your total cholesterol number, which is measured in milligrams per deciliter of blood (mg/dL). A total cholesterol level higher than 200 mg/dL means it's time to take action. Your doctor will work with you to develop the best plan.
3. **Eat better.** This should be on your mind at every meal, including snacks. Make sure you're eating nutrient-rich foods like vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products and lean protein. As a general guideline, steer clear of fatty and salty foods. An occasional indulgence is fine, but make sure these treats

don't become part of your regular diet. Talk to your doctor about the right target for your calories, too.

4. **Manage blood pressure.** High blood pressure is the biggest risk factor for heart disease. Have your blood pressure checked regularly. If you have high blood pressure, manage it with the help of your doctor. Medication, diet and lifestyle changes can lower blood pressure and your heart disease risk.
5. **Lose weight.** If you're overweight, you're at higher risk for heart problems and diabetes. Losing weight lowers that risk and boosts your overall health. It's not easy, so ask for your doctor's guidance and your loved ones' support.
6. **Reduce blood sugar.** If you're a diabetic, work closely with your doctor to manage blood sugar through medication and diet.
7. **Stop smoking.** Talk to your doctor about a quit plan today. Also, speak with your children about the dangers of smoking so they never start.

What happens if your contributing factors turn into heart disease? Your doctor will likely prescribe medication to address what's ailing your heart, whether it's high cholesterol, diabetes complications, a genetic cause or something else. Your doctor may also monitor your heart using a chest X-ray, stress test, echocardiogram, CT heart scan or other screening test.

Heart disease is a manageable condition. Whatever your diagnosis, there's always time to do right by your heart.

Depression Lowdown

Depression affects more than 19 million Americans each year. Do you know the signs? Have you fallen for myths? Test your knowledge with this quiz.

1. Depression usually occurs when something bad happens in your life.

True False

2. Mental Health America outlines 10 symptoms of clinical depression.

Name three: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. Most people can “snap out of” depression. True False

4. More women suffer depression than men. True False

5. Depression and seasonal affective disorder are the same thing.

True False

6. Depression is not a normal part of aging. True False

ANSWERS

1. False. Depression is more than having sad thoughts after a negative event. Depression can be triggered by brain chemical imbalance, negative thinking patterns, certain illnesses or medications, family history or — sometimes — no apparent reason at all.

2. According to Mental Health America (MHA), symptoms of depression are persistent sad or empty mood; sleeping too much or too little; appetite and weight loss or gain; loss of pleasure in activities once enjoyed; restlessness or irritability; persistent physical symptoms; difficulty concentrating or making decisions; fatigue; feelings of guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness; and thinking about suicide or death.

3. False. Depression is a health problem that needs medical treatment. “Depression in most cases is recognizable and treatable,” says Bert Pepper, M.D., an MHA board member. More than 80 percent of those who seek treatment show improvement.

4. True. Depression affects about 12 million American women compared with about 6 million men. But Pepper cautions against ignoring depression in

men. “Men as a group are more covert and find it harder to ask for help,” Pepper says.

5. False. Exposure to less sunlight in winter months triggers the depressive symptoms of seasonal affective disorder (SAD) in some people. “Lots of people who do not have depression have SAD,” Pepper says. The good news is, SAD is treatable with bright, full-room illumination or special desk lamps that give off extra light.

6. True. Depression is not “normal,” no matter what your age, gender or health condition. It can occur at any age. Recent surveys showed that as many as one in five teenagers suffers from depression.

SCORING KEY:

1 right answer = 1 point

5-6: You’re well-positioned to help someone in need.

3-4: Time to brush up on the basics.

0-2: Don’t get down! Learn more about depression at www.mentalhealthamerica.net.

Breast Reconstruction Surgery Benefits

The Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 requires health plans to cover breast reconstruction following a mastectomy, and to provide plan participants with a notice of this coverage each year. We understand that there are many important decisions to consider before undergoing reconstructive breast surgery. That’s why we want to make sure you’re fully aware of your benefits.

If a covered member has a mastectomy, lymph node dissection or lumpectomy and decides, after consulting with her doctor, to have reconstructive surgery, covered services would include:

- Reconstruction of the breast on which the mastectomy was performed.
- Surgery and reconstruction of the other breast to produce a symmetrical appearance.
- Prostheses.
- Treatment of physical complications at any stage of the mastectomy, including lymphedema care.

Please be aware that this coverage is only for members diagnosed with breast cancer. The benefits do not apply to elective cosmetic surgery, which is not covered.

As with your other surgical benefits, this coverage may be subject to a copay or an annual deductible, if your contract requires them. Please refer to your Member Handbook, contract or certificate of coverage for details.

If you have any questions about this or any of your other benefits, please call the customer service phone number listed on the back of this newsletter.

Your Health Routine

Make a habit of these regular check-ups.

Yes, we're all busy with work and family matters. However, there's no excuse for neglecting your health. These reminders can help you stick to a wellness routine that keeps you strong and ready to enjoy the many aspects of your life.

Wellness Exam

All adults should schedule a preventive care visit with their primary doctor once a year. This is your time to ask the doctor any health questions you may have, and to tell him or her about any lifestyle changes that have affected your health, or if immediate family members' health has changed dramatically.

Your doctor will:

- Measure your height and weight.
- Take blood pressure.
- Look at your skin.
- Ask about your diet and exercise routine.
- Discuss your risk factors for certain types of cancer, and possibly perform or recommend screenings.

During this exam, you may receive shots, such as the annual flu vaccine. The specific shots you need are determined by your age, lifestyle, high-risk conditions, type and locations of travel, and previous immunizations. Throughout your adult life, keeping your shots up to date will protect you against flu, tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis, shingles, pneumonia and HPV.

Remember: You should feel comfortable talking to your doctor about smoking cessation, substance abuse, weight loss, depression and sexual matters. Your doctor is there to help, and he or she can support you best when they understand your personal concerns.

Dental Screening

For your overall health, brush your teeth and floss after every meal. If this is not possible, then brush and floss at least twice a day (in the morning and before bed at night). This keeps your gums strong and your teeth cavity-free so you can avoid future dental work. Here are a few other ways to keep your smile bright.

- Visit your dentist for regular checkups and cleanings.
- Avoid eating too many sugary foods.
- Don't use tobacco products, which can cause gum disease and oral cancer.



Vision Screening

Have your vision checked each year, or as directed by your doctor. If you have diabetes, a history of eye injury or vision problems, or are an African-American over age 40, you are at higher risk for vision impairment and may be on a more frequent screening schedule.

Your eye doctor — either an optometrist or ophthalmologist — evaluates your vision and the general health of your eyes. During a typical exam, your doctor tracks how well your eyes focus and how clearly you see with and without your glasses or contact lenses.

The doctor may also:

- Screen for glaucoma by using a machine that blows a slight puff of air at your eyes. This test is quick and painless.
- Dilate your pupils. When your pupils are fully enlarged, your doctor has a better view into your eyes. The eye drops that dilate your pupils make your eyes sensitive to light for several hours. Ask ahead if this procedure is included so you can arrange a ride home.



QUICK TIPS for Talking With Your Doctor

Stay engaged in your care to stay healthy.

The single most important way you can stay healthy is to be an active member of your own health care team. Here are some tips to help you and your doctor become partners in improving your health care.

Give Information. Don't Wait to Be Asked!

- You know important things about your symptoms and your health history. Tell your doctor what you think he or she needs to know.
- It is important to tell your doctor personal information—even if it makes you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.
- Bring a “health history” list with you, and keep it up to date. You might want to make a copy of the form for each member of your family.

- Always bring any medicines, including over-the-counter medications you are taking, or a list of those medicines (include when and how often you take them) and what strength. Talk about any allergies or reactions you have had to your medicines.
- Tell your doctor about any over-the-counter medications or herbal products you use, as well as any alternative medicines or treatments you receive.
- Bring other medical information, such as X-ray films, test results and medical records.

Get Information

- Ask questions. If you don't, your doctor may think you understand everything that was said.
- Write down your questions before your

visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.

- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions. This person can also help you understand and/or remember the answers.
- Take notes. Some doctors do not mind if you bring a tape recorder to help you remember things. But always ask first.
- Let your doctor know if you need more time. If there is not time that day, perhaps you can speak to a nurse or physician assistant on staff. Or, ask if you can call later to speak with someone.

Take Information Home

- Ask for written instructions.
- Your doctor also may have brochures, audio tapes or videotapes that can help you.

Once You Leave the Doctor's Office, Follow Up

- If you have questions, call.
- If your symptoms get worse, or if you have problems with your medicine, call.
- If you had tests and do not hear from your doctor, call for your test results.
- If your doctor said you need to have certain tests, make appointments at the lab or other offices to get them done.
- If your doctor said you should see a specialist, make an appointment right away.

Is Your Asthma Under Control?

Spring has sprung. It's a welcome time of year, unless you're among the 40 million Americans who sniffle and sneeze through the season. Or worse, one of the many Americans whose asthma is intensified by seasonal allergies.

In fact, about 60 percent of asthma attacks are caused by allergens such as pollen. Symptoms of allergic asthma include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness.

It's important to know your asthma triggers so you can avoid them. To keep your asthma under control, follow these tips from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology:

- One of the best things you can do to control your asthma is to take

the right medicine at the right time. This often means use of controller medications. Ask your doctor if your medications are up to date.

- Limit time outside when the temperature or pollen counts are high.
- Keep windows closed and use air conditioning in your home and car.
- Take asthma medications as prescribed. If your asthma isn't under control, talk to your doctor about changing dosages or medication.

In addition, develop an asthma action plan with your doctor. This plan has a green zone, yellow zone and red zone that represent when your asthma is under control and when it's worsening or dangerous, so you know when to get help.

HOW TO CONTACT US

- **EmblemHealth:** 1-877-VIA-EMBLEM (1-877-842-3625)
- **GHI HMO:** 1-877-244-4466
- **GHI PPO:** 1-800-624-2414
- **HIP:** 1-800-HIP-TALK (1-800-447-8255)

Quit Smoking

- **1-866-611-7848**
- **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487)
- **1-800-QUIT-NOW** (1-800-784-8669)

Lab Services

- **Quest Diagnostics Appointments:** 1-888-277-8772

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- **EmblemHealth CompreHealth HMO/EPO members:** 1-877-347-2552
- **EmblemHealth EPO/PPO members:** 1-866-208-1424
- **GHI PPO NYC-resident members:** 1-800-692-2489
- **GHI PPO non-NYC resident members:** 1-866-208-1424
- **GHI HMO members:** 1-800-836-2256
- **HIP members:** 1-888-447-2526

Suspect Insurance Fraud?

- **1-888-4KO-Fraud**

Web Resources

- www.emblemhealth.com
- www.ghi.com
- www.hipusa.com
- www.questdiagnostics.com/patient
- www.valueoptions.com
- www.magellanhealth.com

