

HEALTH MATTERS

Summer 2013



Are You Safe at Home?

Know the facts about domestic abuse.

Home should be your safe haven. For people who are victims of domestic violence, home doesn't feel safe at all.

Domestic violence is a form of abuse that's used to maintain control over a partner in a close relationship. It can be physical, emotional or economic — any threats used to intimidate another person is abuse.

It can happen to anyone, at any age, whether you're married, living together or dating.

Domestic violence against older adults is also common. It can be part of an ongoing pattern that started earlier in life, or it can begin when people age.

Either way, the escalation or onset of domestic violence is often connected to issues related to retirement or sexual changes, disability or changing

roles of family members, such as adult children helping as caregivers.

Older women tend to be at higher risk, because most perpetrators of domestic violence are men. When perpetrators use drugs or alcohol, it can make the situation worse.

If you're in an abusive relationship, you likely know it already. There are usually moments of violence followed by periods of remorse from your partner. They can be subtle warning signs.

Any kind of abuse is a reason to seek help. Talk to your doctor, or reach out to an organization like the National Center on Elder Abuse (ncea.aoa.gov). You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline: **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** or **TTY 1-800-787-3224**.

The benefit information provided is a brief summary, not a complete description of benefits. For more information, contact EmblemHealth. Limitations, copays and restrictions may apply. Benefits, formulary, pharmacy network, premium copays and coinsurance may change on January 1 each year.

YOU'RE COVERED



Sign Up to Go Paperless

Do you have computer access? If you do, go paperless. Having all your health plan information online is a great way to get rid of clutter, stay organized and keep everything in one safe place. It's also a great way to save trees! Sign up today at emblemhealth.com. If you're already a paperless member, thank you.

REMEMBER

the Medicare HMO Plan telephone number is **1-877-344-7364**.

For all your Medicare plan needs and direct connection to customer service representatives, call us.

- PPO:
1-866-557-7300
- HMO:
1-877-344-7364
- TDD:
Call **711**
Monday to Sunday,
8 am to 8 pm.



Enjoy Sunshine Safely

There's nothing quite like feeling the warmth of the sun on your skin. Just play it safe.

Always wear sunscreen when you're outside. Look for products with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Apply it liberally and reapply after swimming or excessive sweating. Take extra precautions by wearing a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and long-sleeved shirts and pants. Also avoid the sun between 10 am and 2 pm, when the sun's rays are the strongest.

Be cautious when there's a heat index of 90 degrees or higher. When your body overheats, you may have symptoms of excessive sweating, weakness, confusion, nausea or headache. Get out of the heat and drink plenty of water. Otherwise the problem could escalate to heatstroke, a serious condition. Symptoms may include a racing heartbeat, fast breathing, dizziness and even seizures. Seek immediate medical attention if you think someone is experiencing heatstroke.



Emblemhealth.com Has a New Look

We're making changes to improve your online experience, including easier navigation. Sign in and find what you're looking for at emblemhealth.com — such as doctors in your network, benefits and services covered under your plan and the status of your recent claims.

Health Matters is published by EmblemHealth to inform members of current health issues and improve the use of services. This publication should not replace the care and advice of your doctor. Always talk to your doctor about your personal health needs.

FOCUS ON MEN

Men need many of the same tests women do to stay healthy. That includes blood pressure and cholesterol checks.

Just like women, men over age 50 should be tested for colorectal cancer. There are different kinds of tests. Your doctor can help you decide on the right one.

Also talk to your doctor about screening for prostate cancer. Your doctor can tell you if you should be tested, and how often.

If you are between the ages of 65 and 75 and have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your life, ask your doctor to screen for an abdominal aortic aneurysm. This one-time test checks for a large blood vessel in your stomach that could burst.

Review your risk factors with your doctor to see if you need other tests.

Fresh from the Farm

Maybe you grew up in farm country or remember stopping at farm stands on family road trips.

Well, farmers markets are more popular than ever — and they're a great place to find bargains.

Buying local produce is good for you, because it's fresher than produce you buy in the supermarket. It doesn't travel long distances to get to you, so it retains more nutrients and flavor.

Take a list of what you need, but be open-minded about what's been freshly harvested. Talk to the farmers to learn about the food they've grown.

Take a look around first, so you can choose your purchases



wisely. Everything's fresh and you want to keep it that way, so don't buy more than you can eat (or share!) before it goes bad.

To find a farmers market near you, visit <http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets>. Also keep an eye on your local paper for announcements during peak season.

STEADY ON YOUR FEET

Did you know that 6 out of 10 falls in older adults happen at home? It doesn't have to be that way. Just take a few basic precautions.

- Get rid of clutter you could trip on, such as shoes, pet bowls and electrical cords that run across pathways.
- Install handrails on all stairways, even if it's just a couple of steps off the porch.
- Use non-skid wax on floors and avoid throw rugs, which are easy to slip on.
- Make sure lighting is bright enough everywhere you walk, especially on stairways and in hallways.
- If you're at the pool, use caution when walking on the deck — it can be extra slippery.
- Avoid wet spots on floors, at the poolside and in public places where people can track in water after a rainstorm.

Indoors and out, wear shoes that fit properly and have non-skid soles. Lace-up shoes or those with fabric fasteners are a good choice.

For more tips to prevent falls, enter Steps-4-Safety PATH program in the search window at emblemhealth.com.

Are You Ready to Quit?

If you're ready to quit smoking, there's plenty of help.

You might start by discussing options with your doctor, especially if you've previously tried to quit. Nicotine replacement therapy (like gum or the patch) or medication may help.

We can help you through our Tobacco-Free PATH program. Available to you at no cost, you'll get the guidance you need including full coverage for smoking cessation medicine so you can quit for good. Join today by calling **1-866-611-7848**, TDD: **1-877-777-6534**. You can also take advantage of the Freedom From Smoking® program offered by the American Lung Association, available in group sessions or online. Learn more at lung.org/stop-smoking/how-to-quit.



Relieving Arthritis

Learn how to live comfortably with the condition.

As people age, their risk of developing osteoarthritis — sometimes called “wear-and-tear” arthritis — increases.

There's another less common kind of arthritis called rheumatoid arthritis (RA). It's more likely to affect women. Men who develop RA tend to get it later in life.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, RA develops when the immune system turns against itself and starts attacking the body's tissues instead of the viruses and bacteria it's supposed to fight. RA attacks the membrane that lines the joints, leading to fluid build-up in the joints. This causes pain and inflammation that can spread throughout the body.

Experts don't know exactly what causes RA, and even the symptoms can be tough to pin down — varying from person to person and

even day to day. Common signs include joints that feel warm to the touch, decreased range of motion, and swelling, inflammation and pain around the affected joints, which will be the same on both sides of the body. RA can also cause fatigue and loss of appetite.

Your doctor can diagnose RA with a medical exam and, most likely, X-rays. Although RA can't be cured, it can be successfully treated.

There are two basic kinds of medication. One type helps reduce inflammation and symptoms, and the other can modify the disease or even put it into remission. People taking medication for RA should see their doctor often for monitoring.

Moderate physical activity can help, too, by strengthening bones and muscles, increasing flexibility, and improving energy and overall sense of well-being.

GET HELP FOR ADDICTION

Could you or someone you love have a substance abuse problem?

Maybe you enjoy an occasional glass of wine or a cocktail. Perhaps you were injured and are taking pain medication. There's nothing wrong with that, but people who find themselves being unable to get through the day without that drink, or just can't stop taking that medication after they're healed, might be addicted.

Addiction causes the body to go through withdrawal symptoms unless it gets more of what it's craving. This creates a cycle of ongoing abuse.

It's important to know the signs of addiction so intervention

and treatment can begin as soon as possible.

When people are in the midst of drug or alcohol abuse, they often ignore their responsibilities at work and home. They might engage in dangerous behavior — especially while they're under the influence — and experience significant mood swings and personality changes.

Addiction can cause people to deny how much alcohol or drugs they're really using, or may lead them to continue using substances even though they're causing health problems.

Some signs of addiction are visible, such as bloodshot eyes, changes in appetite and sleeping

habits, or decreased attention to personal hygiene. Distinct smells of alcohol or other substances may also be noticeable.

If you think you may have a problem with addiction — or notice symptoms in a loved one — talk to your doctor. He or she can help you determine the right treatment.

Depending on the severity of the addiction, you may be able to deal with the problem yourself with some guidance. Know that many people need a support group or a doctor-supervised program.

Whatever path you or your loved one chooses, stay the course. An addiction-free life is worth the effort.

→ A Sensitive Issue

Urinary incontinence is something most people don't like talking about. But they should talk about it, because it's treatable.

Especially common in older adults, urinary incontinence is a loss of bladder control that can range from mild to severe.

There are many causes of urinary incontinence, including medications such as those for your heart or blood pressure. Urinary tract infections and constipation can contribute, as can prostatitis or prostate cancer, bladder cancer or bladder stones, or having had a baby or a hysterectomy.

Treatments for urinary incontinence vary depending on the cause and severity. They include bladder training, dietary and fluid management, physical therapy to strengthen pelvic floor muscles and medication. Medical devices and interventions specifically for women are also available, along with minor surgical procedures.

In some cases, a combination of treatments works best. Don't be shy: Talk to your doctor about your symptoms so you can get the treatment you need.

Sugar and Your Eyes

Do you know that taking good care of your eyes is an important part of overall diabetes care?

Diabetes, especially if it's poorly controlled, can lead to vision problems including glaucoma, cataracts and diabetic retinopathy, which is damage to the blood vessels in the retina.

All of these conditions can cause vision loss, but they don't have to. If they're diagnosed early, they're all treatable.

People with diabetes should have a dilated eye exam at least once a year. If you have diabetic retinopathy, your doctor may want to see you more often. A comprehensive vision exam will also include a glaucoma test.

Diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and cataracts can be treated with surgery. Many people with glaucoma don't need surgery if they use eye drops that can keep the condition from progressing.

And remember: Keeping your blood glucose in good control is the best way to help prevent complications from diabetes, including eye disease.

Powerful Medicine

Know what to take and when — and where to get answers.

Taking prescription medicine exactly as the doctor orders is important for everyone. And it's extremely important if you're taking several medications.

There's more to taking your medicine correctly than just popping a pill. You need to know how often to take your medication, at what time of day, and other instructions like whether or not you need to take your medicine with food.

Review your medications with your doctor at each visit. It's easiest to bring your medications — prescriptions, over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and supplements — with you. Ask plenty of questions, especially if a medication is added or changed, so you'll know what to expect.

To help you remember to take your medicine as directed, try leaving your medicines where you'll

see them. Using daily “pill minder” boxes is a great way to keep track of multiple medications you may take at different times of day.

There's another excellent resource to help you take your medication properly — your pharmacist.

It's best to use one pharmacy, so they have a record of all the prescription medicines you take. Your pharmacist can help you avoid potentially dangerous medication interactions. This includes prescriptions and OTC medicines.

When choosing an OTC medication, check with the pharmacist to make sure it's safe to use with your current prescriptions and health conditions.

Also note that when your doctor's office is closed, your pharmacist is a great source of information any time you have medication questions.





WATCHING YOUR WEIGHT?

A healthy weight is essential to maintaining good health.

Obesity can lead to a host of health issues, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, stroke, osteoarthritis and certain cancers.

How is obesity defined? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that an adult with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher is obese.

BMI is calculated using your height and weight. Your doctor can determine your BMI and online calculators are also widely available.

Just losing 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can reduce the risk of some health conditions. Slow and steady wins the race; losing one to two pounds a week is healthiest.

Moderate exercise for 30 minutes a day, most days, can help you lose weight. Also eat a diet high in vegetables, fruits and whole grains and low in fat. Reduce portion sizes to keep calories within a healthy range. A good tip is to eat your meals on small plates. For more tips, visit www.choosemyplate.gov.

SQUASH SALAD

- 3 medium green and yellow squash
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lemon
- 1 to 2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 5 shaved slices Parmesan cheese

Very thinly slice the squash lengthwise. Make a single layer of slices on a large plate. Lightly sprinkle the squash with the chives and about 1 teaspoon of olive oil.

Slice partway through the lemon. Finely grate about 1/4 teaspoon of lemon zest onto the squash and top it with 4 or 5 drops of juice. Sprinkle a teaspoon of tarragon over the squash. Then season lightly with salt and pepper.

Repeat the layers 4 or 5 times, finishing with olive oil and herbs. Set aside and allow the squash to soften for about 30 minutes. Garnish with the cheese slices just before serving.



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HEALTH OR WELLNESS OR PREVENTION INFORMATION



Bringing Care Closer



Finding your way through the health care system can be tricky. Sometimes you need someone to talk to — face-to-face. That's when EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care comes in handy. We have solution specialists, community liaisons, registered nurses and pharmacists — all onsite, ready to answer your questions and connect you to the resources and care you need. We'll answer your questions about medicine you may be taking, coverage options and help you choose a doctor. We have services for non-EmblemHealth members, too. And there is no charge for the help we provide. So let us help you,

your family and your neighbors. For now, you can find Neighborhood Care in two of the communities we serve — Harlem and Cambria Heights. More locations will be opening throughout NYC soon. In the meantime, come pay us a visit at our Manhattan or Queens location, Monday to Saturday, 10 am to 7 pm. You'll be greeted by a friendly face, eager to show you what care feels like! For more information, call or visit the Harlem office: **1-866-469-0999** or 215 West 125th Street; or the Cambria Heights office: **1-866-539-0999** or 206-20 Linden Blvd., Cambria Heights. Find us online at **ehnc.com**.

HIP Health Plan of New York (HIP) and Group Health Incorporated (GHI) are Medicare Advantage organizations with a Medicare contract. HIP and GHI are EmblemHealth companies.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Customer Service

PPO: 1-866-557-7300

HMO: 1-877-344-7364

Ask to speak with someone in your preferred language.

Monday to Sunday, 8 am to 8 pm

Tobacco-Free PATH Program

1-866-611-7848

TDD: 1-877-777-6534

Lab Services — Quest Diagnostics

1-888-277-8772 (appointments)

1-866-697-8378 (customer service)

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Emblem Behavioral Health Services

Program (EBHSP) for HMO members:

1-888-447-2526

ValueOptions for PPO members:

1-866-318-7595

PATH Program

1-866-447-8080

Report Insurance Fraud

1-888-4KO-Fraud (1-888-456-3728)

For TDD assistance, any of the above numbers can be reached by calling NYS Relay Services at **711**.

Web Resources

emblemhealth.com/medicare

express-scripts.com

(mail order pharmacy)

questdiagnostics.com

(lab services)

valueoptions.com

(behavioral health services)