Understanding COPD

COPD stands for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. It’s an illness that makes it hard to breathe. COPD does not go away, but you can manage it. The first step is to take a spirometry test. This is a simple and easy breathe-in and breathe-out test that measures the strength of your lungs. It’s something you can even do at home.

**Spirometry — Understanding Your COPD**

Spirometry shows you and your doctor how well air is entering and leaving your lungs. Your doctor will also know if you are at risk of getting COPD or if your COPD is getting worse by comparing how you did the previous time on the test.

**Three Things You Can Do**

1. **Stop smoking!** It’s a fact that smoking is related to as many as 9 out of 10 deaths caused by COPD. Let us help you quit. Call 1-866-611-7848.

2. **Protect yourself from the flu.** Getting the flu makes COPD symptoms worse. Make sure to get a flu shot once a year. Call our Flu Hotline at 1-877-859-9001.

3. **Have an action plan.** Work with your doctor on this. Your plan should include the medicines you may need to take.

**Contact Us**

1-866-447-8080 (TDD: 1-866-954-3277), Monday to Friday, 8 am to 7 pm.

Our PATH program can help you prevent or better manage COPD.
**PATH TO WELLNESS**

Having a chronic health condition like asthma, COPD, coronary artery disease (CAD), depression, diabetes, heart failure or hypertension is not easy to manage alone. Fortunately, EmblemHealth Medicare members can get extra help. Whether you have one or more of these conditions, we can help you stay on track with your care and have a better quality of life.

Enroll in the EmblemHealth Disease Management PATH Program — at no additional cost to you. PATH members tend to feel better, stay healthier and have fewer hospital visits. You also can benefit from this program. Here's what you can expect:

- Regular phone calls from a nurse
- Occasional recorded phone messages
- Educational information mailed to you about your condition

We may also refer you to an EmblemHealth Neighborhood Care office if one is near you. That’s where you’ll get face-to-face service from staff, community liaisons and health care professionals. Learn more at [ehnc.com](http://ehnc.com).

Consider our PATH program as a part of your care team strategy. When you enroll, we’ll guide you through managing everyday aspects of your treatment and care. So take the next step, give us a call: 1-866-447-8080.

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**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.
Your Breast Reconstruction Surgery Benefits

The Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 requires health plans to cover breast reconstruction following a mastectomy. All health plans also have 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 his or her doctor to have reconstructive surgery, covered services would include:

• Reconstruction of the breast on which the mastectomy was performed
• Prostheses
• Surgery and reconstruction of the other breast to produce a symmetrical (similar) appearance
• 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 required by your contract. Please refer to your Member Handbook and Contract or Certificate of Coverage for details.

If you have any questions about this or any of your other benefits, please call customer service or visit emblemhealth.com.

Improving Your Care

The mission of our Quality Improvement Program (QIP) is to make sure you get the best medical and behavioral health care services from our network doctors, practitioners, hospitals and other providers. We do this by:

• Helping you stay healthy with educational mailings, phone calls, newsletters, yearly screenings and health reminders and health news, facts and alerts at emblemhealth.com.

• Helping you get better quickly and live well with chronic illness through our health and case management programs. We help members with asthma, cancer, coronary artery disease, depression, diabetes, heart failure, HIV/AIDS, kidney disease, high blood pressure and high-risk pregnancies understand and manage their condition.

• Providing our network doctors with tools and resources to help give you the best care.

Please visit emblemhealth.com for more on our QIP and its success.
Sticking with Your Medicines for Heart Disease

Do you feel overwhelmed by the medicines you have to take every day for your heart disease? It can be a lot of work to keep up, but adherence is important for your health.

**What does adherence mean?**
Adherence means following a medication plan set by your doctor: the dose, the time of day and how long the medicine should be taken. When you follow these directions, you’re doing the most you can for your health.

**Why is adherence important?**
About a third to half of all people with heart disease stop taking their medication as directed. Stopping or not taking your medicine the right way can make your health worse. That means more doctor visits, wasted money and spending time in the hospital. It can be frustrating and dangerous.

We suggest you work with your doctor to create a medication plan that’s right for you.

**Make adherence easy to swallow**

1. **Use a pillbox.**
   Organize your medications by day of the week.
   That way, all your medicine is in one place.

2. **Talk to your doctor.**
   Ask questions when you don’t understand something. And let your doctor know if it is hard for you to follow your medication plan.

3. **Keep medicine visible.**
   Store your medications in a place where you will notice them.

4. **Have loved ones check in.**
   A quick reminder does wonders for adherence.

5. **Notify yourself.**
   Set an alarm at home or on your mobile phone.

Are You At Risk for Diabetes?

Nearly 26 million people in the United States have diabetes, and almost 80 million more are at risk. You may not know you are at risk. The symptoms of diabetes are hard to notice — like getting really tired, thirsty or having wounds that heal slowly.

Before getting diabetes, you might have prediabetes. This means you have too much sugar in your blood but not enough to be called diabetes. Being prediabetic makes you more likely to get diabetes and heart disease.

The good news is that diabetes can be prevented or delayed by keeping active and losing weight. See your doctor and get tested if you’re at risk!

Stick to your medication. Whether you’re taking something for your blood pressure or any other medicine, stick with your doses. Don’t just stop taking your medicine if you’re feeling better. Let your doctor decide if you should stop or change to another medication.
There are two reasons to get tested or screened for colorectal cancer. The first is to prevent it. The second is to catch it early so you can treat it and beat it.

During the test, the doctor looks for anything unusual, such as small growths called polyps. These can be easily removed, which can help prevent this kind of cancer. Men and women should start having regular screening tests for colorectal cancer at age 50.

**Other Cancer Screenings**

Women should also be tested for breast and cervical cancer. Men should talk to their doctor about prostate cancer. And everyone should ask about skin cancer screening.

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**Beating Colorectal Cancer to the Punch**

Keep More Money in Your Pocket

Do you know how much extra money you could have if you quit smoking for one year? Take a guess. Assume that you are a pack a day smoker. Mark your choice.

- A. $1,000
- B. $2,000
- C. $3,000
- D. $4,000

The average cost of a pack of cigarettes in the New York and New Jersey area ranges from $8 to $14. Using $11 a pack, if you smoke one pack every day, you would be saving $330 each month by stopping. That’s $4,000 a year! And you will be — and feel — healthier.

Let us help you. Our Tobacco-Free PATH Program is available to you at no cost. You’ll get free telephone support, guidance and a personalized plan to quit. Join today by calling 1-866-611-7848.

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**Specialized Care, Especially for You**

At EmblemHealth, we believe care starts with you, so we encourage you to visit health care providers who offer a patient-centered approach to your care. That’s what you’ll get with AdvantageCare Physicians, where patients are the priority.

With AdvantageCare Physicians, you’ll have a care team that includes your doctor, a nurse, a medical assistant, a patient service representative and a specialist if needed. The team tracks your health, watching for early signs of possible health problems so they can be treated right away. A prompt response to possible health problems helps lower your chance of needing to be hospitalized or having to go to the emergency room.

**Here’s what you get with AdvantageCare Physicians:**

- Fast and easy access to care.
- Leading clinical expertise with key specialists and services, like lab tests, X-rays and pharmacy services — all at the same location.
- Same-day office visits with extended morning and evening hours at most practices.
- Follow-up care that’s arranged by your doctor.

AdvantageCare Physicians believes in holding your health to a higher standard. We hope you do, too.

Visit us today: advantagecarephysicians.com
Pharmacy and Medical Provider Directories Are Available

Need to find a network pharmacy or medical provider near you? Your pharmacy and provider directories are available now! To order, call customer service. Also, our online provider directories are updated daily. So for the most up-to-date listings, sign into emblemhealth.com and follow the links to search for a pharmacy or medical provider.

What You Need to Stay Well

Some of us think we need to see the doctor only when we’re sick. The truth is, staying healthy means seeing your doctor even when you’re feeling fine. This means regular checkups. When was your last checkup with your doctor? You should have a physical exam once every year. Perhaps now is a good time to schedule a visit. There is no additional cost to you because your plan covers this exam.

What you can expect from your checkup

Your doctor will do a complete exam to make sure your body is working well. The doctor will listen to your heart and lungs and examine your ears, nose, throat, eyes, lymph nodes and thyroid. He or she may even check your reflexes.

Lab tests

The doctor will likely ask you for a urine sample and have your blood drawn for a complete blood count (CBC) test. Your blood test may be more accurate if you have not eaten for several hours before blood is taken. Call your doctor’s office a day or two before your visit to confirm this so you will be prepared.

The exam will include recording and tracking in your personal health file, your:

• Blood pressure
• Heart and respiration rate
• Temperature
• Weight

During your exam, tell the doctor if you have noticed any changes in your health. It’s also a good time to discuss your exercise routine and to ask if you should make changes.

Bring a list of all the prescription drugs you take as well as over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and supplements. The doctor may want to review them for possible interactions.

Your doctor will tell you how often you need to visit depending on your health status, age and family history. Since the cost for a preventive care visit like this is covered, there’s really no good excuse to put it off. Remember the old saying: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”
Mind Your Mental Health

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Physical health and exercise can keep you feeling good and even help improve your mental health. Good mental health lets us make the most out of time spent with loved ones and gets us through tough times.

Tips to Improve Your Mental Health

Accept Yourself. Embrace who you are. Nobody’s perfect. We all have our good and bad moments.

Get Involved. Meet people, make friends and get involved in activities. Join a club or take a class. Connecting with people is a key to good mental health.

Keep Active. Make regular exercise part of your day. Exercise helps to prevent health problems, like high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis. It also makes the biggest difference on days when you are feeling down. So make the effort, even when you really don’t want to. Try little things like parking the car farther away from where you are going or taking the stairs instead of an elevator.

Want More Help? Get in touch with Emblem Behavioral Health Services Program (EBHSP). Quality providers are ready for you and eligible family members in need.

Just call the EBHSP number for your plan on the back page.
Health or Wellness or Prevention Information

Watch Your Step

Follow these tips to help prevent falls as spring arrives.

Get an eye exam
Keep your vision sharp so you're aware of your surroundings.

Reduce risks around your house
Install or tighten the railings near your front and back doors. Put frequently used items in easy-to-reach places. Keep porch and patio lights on in the evening. Be careful with wet steps and walkways.

Stay safe when you're out
Use a backpack or cross-body bag to keep your hands free. Sometimes, street curbs are high or molded for bikers and strollers. Look before you take a step. And always watch out for slippery sidewalks and crosswalks.

Improve your strength and balance
Ask your doctor about things you can do to improve your strength. Here's one simple exercise: stand on one leg while holding onto a countertop. This improves balance and coordination. Your doctor may also suggest things to do to keep your bones as strong as possible.

Just in case...
If you do fall, use objects around you to help break your fall. Take your cell phone with you when you go out so you can make calls if you fall and can't get up.

For more tips, visit emblemhealth.com and enter PATH programs in the search window. You’ll find our Steps-4-Safety fall prevention program along with our other PATH Wellness programs. You may also call 1-888-447-5451.

HIP Health Plan of New York (HIP) is an HMO plan and Group Health Incorporated (GHI) is a PPO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment depends on contract renewal. HIP and GHI are EmblemHealth companies.