Sun Safety

You don’t need to be at the beach, pool, or playground to get too much sun. Your skin needs protection every day no matter where you are.

**Protect Your Skin**

- **Apply sunscreen.** Use sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher when spending time outside. It should also block the sun’s harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. Don’t forget to apply it on your ears, noses, lips, tops of feet and head if your hair is very short. And reapply after swimming or sweating.

- **Seek shade.** It’s important to rest under an umbrella or shady tree. Indoor activities are best during midday hours when the sun is the strongest.

- **Get a hat.** A hat with a wide brim can protect your face, ears and neck. Make sure to put sunscreen on those body parts even if your hat provides coverage to those areas.

- **Wear sunglasses.** For the most protection, look for sunglasses that wrap around and block most of the sun’s harmful UV rays.

- **Drink fluids.** Stay hydrated, especially when there’s a heat index of 90 degrees or higher. Your body could overheat, which can escalate to heatstroke, a serious condition.

*Remind your friends and family to use these options to prevent sunburn, too!*
Prescription Procedures

It's important to follow your doctor’s orders when it comes to taking any prescription medication. Don't stop taking it without getting your doctor’s okay first. Your health can worsen. And if you don’t take your medicine the right way, it can cause extra doctor visits, emergency room visits, a hospital stay and can even lead to death.

The pharmacist can help you take medicine safely, too. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about your health issues and all the medicines you take, including vitamins and over-the-counter drugs. Some medicines shouldn’t be taken together and can make you sick.

Ask your doctor these questions about your prescription medications:

☐ What is the name of the medicine I am taking?
☐ Why do I need to take it?
☐ How many times a day do I take it?
☐ How long do I take it?
☐ Does it qualify for mail-order delivery (a 90-day supply)?
☐ Do I take it with food or without?
☐ Do I need to avoid alcohol, certain foods or activities such as driving?
☐ What are the side effects and what should I do if they occur?
☐ What should I do if I take too much or too little by mistake?

Bring this list when you see your doctor and check off each box as you ask every question. Also, write down the answers and keep them with your medicine.

Farm Fresh

Farmers’ markets are more popular than ever. They’re a great place to find bargains on the freshest fruit and vegetables, eggs, milk, cheese and meat from local farms.

You should always consider buying local produce. It retains more nutrients and flavor because it hasn’t travelled long distances to get to you. Fruits and vegetables are highest in nutrients at the peak of freshness. Seasonal produce is more than nutritious — it’s cost-effective, too. So you’ll be supporting farmers from your area without breaking the bank.

Take a list of what you need, but be adventurous and try new things, too. Ask the sellers about a product you haven’t tried before. They’ll be happy to teach you and may even have recipes to share.

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

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.
Improving Your State of Mind

In a recent survey of some of our members age 65 and older, 87 percent reported that their mental health was much better or the same as two years earlier.

Lifestyle Changes
As we age, our world tends to become smaller. We may stay at home more often than we go out. We may spend more time reading or watching television than we do taking walks. We may have medical conditions that make it more difficult to move around. These are normal lifestyle changes. When life was hectic, we looked forward to having time to read a book. These same lifestyle changes may reduce the amount of time we spend with family, friends and neighbors. Often, more free time to read also gives us more free time to worry. We worry about being able to get to the doctor, prepare meals and manage money. We also think about our pain, a lot.

EmblemHealth Can Help
When worries, loneliness and sadness are a daily occurrence or when you no longer enjoy activities that were previously enjoyable, take advantage of the behavioral health services available to you through EmblemHealth. Your doctor may be able to recommend a mental health expert or you can contact Emblem Behavioral Health Services:

HMO members: 1-888-447-2526
PPO members: 1-866-318-7595

COPD Facts

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is an illness that makes it hard to breathe. According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, COPD is the third leading cause of death in the United States. There’s no cure, but there are things you can do to manage your condition.

Take a spirometry test. This breathing test measures the strength of your lungs and can detect COPD even before you have symptoms. Based on your test results, your doctor will know if:
• You are at risk of getting COPD
• You have COPD
• Your condition has changed since you were last tested

Have an action plan. Your doctor will determine your best course of treatment. Ask for help creating an action plan. It should include any medicines you need to take. EmblemHealth can help too: call to join our free Better Breathing PATH program: 1-866-447-8080.

Stop smoking! It’s a fact that smoking is related to as many as 9 out of 10 deaths caused by COPD. We can help you quit. Call 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487).

Protect yourself from the flu. Getting the flu makes COPD symptoms worse. So make sure you get a flu shot yearly.
Bone Health

Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become fragile and are more likely to fracture. It occurs when the body fails to form enough new bone, when too much existing bone is reabsorbed by the body or both.

There are no symptoms in the early stages of osteoporosis. Many times, people will have a fracture before learning they have the disease. In serious cases, bones in your spine can fracture for no apparent reason, with serious consequences.

If you are over age 65 and have recently had a fracture, ask your doctor if you should have a bone mineral density test. It’s a quick and painless test. Even if you haven’t had a fracture, most professionals recommend that women get tested beginning at age 65 and men at age 70.

You could be at increased risk of osteoporosis if you have:

• A broken bone caused by normal activities
• Chronic rheumatoid arthritis or kidney disease
• Early menopause
• A history of hormone treatment, prostate cancer or breast cancer
• A family history of osteoporosis

Keep your bones strong:

• Take calcium and vitamin D
• Do weight-bearing exercises such as walking, dancing and playing tennis
• Give up unhealthy habits like smoking and drinking alcohol

Tips for Better Physical Health

In a recent survey of some of our members age 65 and older, 72 percent reported that their physical health was much better or the same as two years earlier.

Based on the health care services our members receive during the year, we are able to get a pretty good picture of the overall health of our members. This helps us improve the way we work with you to maintain or improve your health.

Go to your doctor at least annually and get all recommended screenings.

Tips for maintaining or improving your physical health:

• Bring a list of your medications to review with your doctor. This includes over-the-counter medicine and vitamins.
• Ask questions about how to relieve pain, like back pain and stiff and painful joints.
• Tell your doctor about any problems you are having, like climbing stairs, bathing, eating or shopping for groceries.
• Ask your doctor for help with urinary incontinence if you’re having trouble.

Listen to your doctor’s advice about tests needed, recommendations for changes in diet and physical activity and taking all medications as prescribed. Only your doctor can provide guidance specifically for you.

Customized Care

Doctors who specialize in geriatrics focus on the unique needs of older adults. To find a physician with a specialty in geriatrics, visit the Find a Doctor section at emblemhealth.com and select Geriatric Medicine as the specialty. You can also call Customer Service at the phone number on the back of your Member ID card.
Keep Fit and Healthy
It’s not healthy to be overweight at any age. Obesity can lead to all kinds of health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, stroke and certain cancers. Your doctor can tell you if you’re obese by calculating your body mass index, a measure of body fat based on height and weight.

Moderate exercise for 30 minutes a day can help you lose weight. Slow and steady wins the race. Losing one to two pounds a week is healthiest. Before you start a weight-loss program, ask your doctor. Then look for one near your local church or within your community. Visit letsmove.gov.

Portion control helps support healthy eating
Have meals on small plates to help you eat less. Place snacks in small bowls instead of eating directly from the bag or container and learn about the MyPlate rule. Half a dinner plate should be vegetables and some fruit. The other half should be lean protein and whole grains. Add a glass of milk and it’s a balanced meal. For more on MyPlate, visit choosemyplate.gov.

Pay Your Bill by Phone!
Do you know that as an EmblemHealth member you can pay your monthly premium securely by phone? Simply call 1-888-447-7703 and choose this option each month.

We can accept payments from your checking or savings account, Visa or MasterCard.

Interested in auto bill-pay?
This option allows you to setup automatic monthly payments from your bank account. Once you choose this option, we withdraw your premium from your account every month until you cancel this request. To enroll, sign in to or register from your secure online member account at emblemhealth.com.
AdvantageCare Physicians: 
Patient-Centered Care for the Healthiest You

With 36 locations throughout New York City and Long Island, AdvantageCare Physicians make patients the priority through a patient-centered approach to care. A care team, consisting of your doctor, a nurse, medical assistant, patient service representative, and specialists, tracks your health, watching for early signs of possible health problems so they can be treated right away. This helps lower your chance of needing to go to the hospital or emergency room.

Here’s what you get with AdvantageCare Physicians:

- A Personal Care Team focused on your optimal care.
- Full range of health services, often in one location — primary care, pediatric care, cardiology, OB/GYN, laboratory, pharmacy, X-ray and more.
- Urgent care and extended hours at most locations.
- Wide range of specialists connected to most of the leading hospitals in the New York metro area.
- Secure electronic health records, available at all 36 locations.
- MyACP — a secure, online website for managing your health care. You can keep track of your appointments, request prescription refills and send questions to your Personal Care Team — right from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

Adding team-based care across all locations keeps every person on your team in the loop, which means a better experience for you. AdvantageCare Physicians holds your health to a higher standard. We hope you do, too.

To learn more about AdvantageCare Physicians, visit acpny.com.

Protect Yourself

Medicare members have the power to stop Medicare fraud and identity theft. Protect yourself against both by following these tips and sharing them with your friends:

- Protect your private health information. Don’t let anyone use your member ID. And never give your personal, medical or financial information to anyone you don’t know and trust. They could get services under your name illegally.
- Always check your statements. Review your health plan statement to make sure you received all the services listed and that services were only billed once. Billing for services not received and for the same service twice are common types of Medicare fraud.
- Free means free. Don’t give your member ID when getting free health services. It’s not required.

If you suspect fraud or your Quarterly Summary lists services that you did not receive, call us: 1-888-4KO-Fraud (1-888-456-3728).
Take Control of Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it’s also a main cause of disability among Americans.

Steps you can take to control or prevent heart disease:

• **Follow your doctor’s advice.** It may include lifestyle changes like increasing your physical activity, reducing your salt intake and quitting smoking.

• **Handle your stress.** Take time to breathe and do things you enjoy every day.

• **Take prescribed medicines as the doctor orders.** If you take medicine to lower your blood pressure, be sure you:
  – Know how to take it the right way (with or without food, how many times per day, in the morning or at night)
  – Get refills before you run out

• **Never stop taking your medicine without getting an okay from your doctor.** Visit emblemhealth.com for information about our pharmacy home-delivery service. You can get up to a 90-day supply mailed to your home. You can also choose an auto refill option.

• **Find out if you should take a low-dose of aspirin.** Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of daily aspirin therapy. Ask:
  – If you would benefit from taking aspirin
  – About the side effects
  – What time of day should it be taken
  – How long should you take aspirin
  – If it will interfere with your other medications

Together, you and your doctor can decide what’s best for your heart. For more information, visit [heart.org](http://heart.org) and the health and wellness section on emblemhealth.com.

Stay Safe

Domestic violence is abuse and should never happen. If it does — there is help. Any threat used to scare or control someone is abuse. Here are some common signs of domestic abuse:

• **Pulling your hair, punching, slapping, kicking, biting or choking you**

• **Damaging your property when angry (throwing objects, punching walls)**

• **Using objects or weapons to threaten you or actually hurt you**

• **Trapping you in your home or keeping you from leaving**

• **Preventing you from calling the police or getting medical help**

• **Harming your children or grandchildren**

If you or someone you know is being abused, get help. Your doctor can give you advice. You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1−800−799−SAFE (7233) or visit [thelotline.org](http://thelotline.org).
Check-in with Online Wellness Tools

Being healthy requires having the resources to get and stay well. To help you better manage your health goals, we offer you these free online tools:

**Health Assessment**
Take this brief survey and get a summary of your health risks and suggestions for digital wellness coaching you can access as part of your plan.

**Health Journeys**
Follow a unique HealthMap to reshape habits while learning about physical activity, nutrition, weight management, stress and energy and sleep. It can also help manage chronic conditions like diabetes, asthma and heart disease.

**Personal Health Record**
Securely store your health records online, such as medications, medical history, tests and contacts. Once you start an account, your prescription and lab records are automatically updated. You can also print this record for your doctors.

To start using these tools, sign in to or register for your secure account at [emblemhealth.com](http://emblemhealth.com).

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 in HIP and GHI depends on contract renewal. HIP and GHI are EmblemHealth companies.