



**CHOICE**  
Health Plans

# Member News

VNSNY CHOICE Total (HMO D-SNP) Member Newsletter

Summer/Fall 2020

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## Protect Yourself – Get Your Flu Shot

It's even more important this year to get the flu vaccine as COVID-19 continues to spread. At this time, there is no approved COVID-19 vaccine. Getting your flu shot can reduce your risk of dealing with both the flu and COVID-19. Every year the flu is different, so every year you need an updated vaccine which takes 2 weeks to offer protection. As a member of our plan, the flu shot is available, at no cost to you. Call Member Services for more information at 1-866-783-1444, 8 am – 8 pm, 7 days a week.

## Staying Healthy During COVID-19

Are you facing physical and/or mental health issues due to COVID-19, made worse by hunger, lost wages or loneliness? **There is help.**

### You Need Not Be Hungry

New Yorkers have free access to healthy food, including home-delivered meals. Call Member Services for more information.

### Mental Health Is Important

The National Institute on Aging reports that social isolation is linked to increased risks of high blood pressure, anxiety, depression and mental decline.

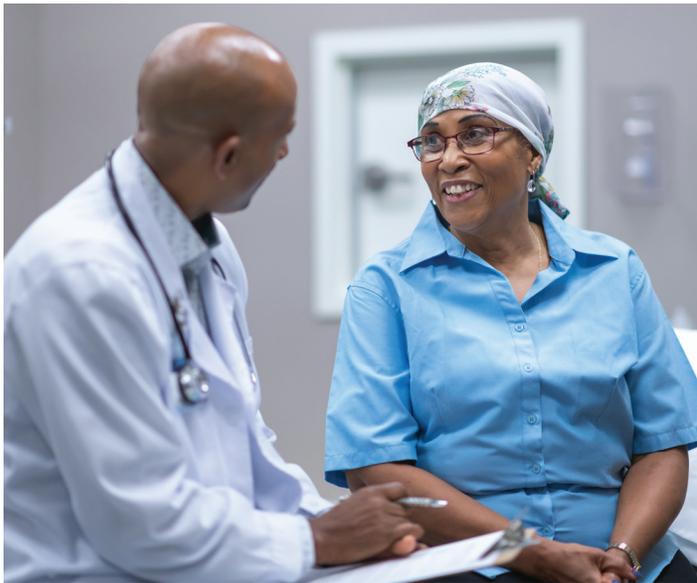
#### Follow these mental health tips in these stressful times:

- **Stay connected.** Call or see family, friends, neighbors, health care aides.
- **Breathe fresh air.** Go outside, open a window, face the sun and breathe.
- **Move.** Take a walk or, if in a wheelchair, swing your arms and flex your legs. Find fitness programs online at [nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity](https://nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity).\*
- **Eat well.** Eat mostly fruits, vegetables and lean protein.

\*Check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

Food and Mental Health Resources: [access.nyc.gov/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/](https://access.nyc.gov/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/)

CHOICE Behavioral Health Partner: Beacon Health Options - **1-855-735-6098**



## Go See Your Doctor Soon

With COVID-19 trending down (as of this writing) in New York, and medical offices following high sanitary standards of patient and office safety, it's time to schedule an **in-person** visit with your Primary Care Physician (PCP).

Your PCP needs to see you in the office if you have chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and asthma. Take time to discuss your medications and whether they are working well together.

**But is it safe to visit your PCP in person?  
Yes, it's safe.**

Discuss the results of the following tests and screenings as recommended by your PCP:

- Hemoglobin A1c - 3-month average blood sugar
- Blood Pressure
- Spirometry
- Cancer Screenings, including breast and colon
- Dental and Eye exams
- Flu Shot

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**Spirometry** (spy-ROM-uh-tree) is an in-office test that's used to diagnose asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The test assesses how well your lungs work by measuring how much air you inhale and how quickly you exhale.

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## It's Not Just You

Urinary incontinence is when you accidentally leak urine. It happens to most people at one time or another, especially older women.

### Why does it happen?

- Weak and/or overactive bladder muscles
- Medications like water pills
- Putting off a trip to the bathroom for too long
- An enlarged prostate in men

### The good news! There are ways to manage urinary incontinence, including:

- Planning frequent bathroom trips. Don't forget to go!
- Doing exercise to strengthen pelvic floor muscles.
- Avoiding spicy foods, carbonated drinks and caffeine, which can irritate the bladder and make the problem worse.
- Asking your provider about medications for overactive bladder.
- Using protective pads or undergarments to avoid embarrassing situations.
- As a last resort, there are surgeries that may help.

Talk to your provider about what is the best for you. A useful resource is:

### National Association for Continence

1-800-252-3337 (toll-free)

[www.nafc.org](http://www.nafc.org)

## Staying In Touch with Your Doctor

**Telehealth** allows you to use your regular or smart phone, computer or tablet (with or without video) to speak with your doctor. It works well for behavioral health visits, which may have increased during the pandemic. Even as New York safely reopens, you can still use telehealth. Remember, there are tests and screenings that must take place in-person. Talk to your doctor about what makes sense for you.

## Managing Chronic Pain Differently

It's been weeks and your lower back still hurts, even though you are following your doctor's orders.

Pain that lasts more than 12 weeks is **chronic**. Consider adding one of these natural approaches along with your doctor's orders:

1. **Healthy Diet:** Replace processed foods with fresh fruit, vegetables and lean protein, especially if you have diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease.
2. **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Pay attention to your body in the present moment, releasing tension by focusing on your breath, repeating a meaningful word or phrase to relax your mind and body.
3. **Physical and Occupational Therapies:** If your doctor recommends it, incorporate healing exercises taught by licensed therapists to help relieve pain and stiffness in joints.



### Your care team is here to help.

Call us at 1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711) for help to arrange follow-up visits with your Primary Care Physician or to be referred to a nutritionist, physical or occupational therapist.

## Be on the Lookout for Two Important Member Surveys

(Summer through early 2021)

1. You may receive a survey by mail from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services called the [Medicare Health Outcomes Survey](#) — which asks about your mental and physical health in the last two years.
2. You may also receive a call from SPH Analytics on behalf of VNSNY CHOICE to participate in a survey. The survey measures your satisfaction with services from VNSNY CHOICE Total, your Medicare and prescription drug plan.

CHOICE uses the results of both surveys to find ways to improve service for all members. That's why we want to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to complete these important surveys.

Please note that completing these surveys will never impact your benefits.

Thank you in advance for completing these surveys and for being a member of VNSNY CHOICE Total.

If you have any questions, call Member Services: 1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711), 7 days a week, 8 am – 8 pm.

## Be Aware of COVID-19 Scams

Have you received robocalls, text messages or emails offering free face masks? Or maybe you've seen social media posts about free COVID-19 testing kits, "cures," or protective equipment?

Scammers are using the COVID-19 pandemic to steal your Medicare Number and personal information. If anyone reaches out to get your Medicare Number or personal information in exchange for something, it's a scam. Medicare will never contact you for your Medicare Number or other personal information unless you've given them permission in advance.

Visit [Medicare.gov/fraud](https://www.medicare.gov/fraud) for more information. If you suspect fraud, call 1-800-MEDICARE to report it.

VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans complies with Federal civil rights laws. VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

ATENCION: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711).

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711)。



**CHOICE**<sup>SM</sup>  
Health Plans

VNSNY CHOICE

220 East 42nd Street, 3rd Floor

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[www.vnsnychoice.org](http://www.vnsnychoice.org)

**Member Services:**

1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711)

8 am – 8 pm, 7 days a week



**TRANSPORTATION UPDATE**

Effective September 1, 2020, to schedule transportation, call **Logisticare** at least 48 hours in advance at: 1-877-718-4219 (TTY: 711), 8 am – 8 pm, Monday – Friday.

**If Something Seems Wrong, Tell Us.**

VNSNY CHOICE is committed to finding and stopping fraud, waste or abuse in our health care plans.

**Anonymous Reporting**

VNSNY CHOICE Compliance Hotline: 1-888-634-1558.  
File an online report at: [vnsny.ethicspoint.com](http://vnsny.ethicspoint.com).  
Learn more at: [vnsnychoice.org/for-our-members/member-rights/compliance-program](http://vnsnychoice.org/for-our-members/member-rights/compliance-program).



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**Word Scramble**

*Unscramble these words from the Summer Newsletter*

1. **masc** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Hint: A misleading act*

4. **ulf hots** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Hint: Protection against the flu*

2. **mentla helath** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Hint: Feeling well in your mind*

5. **inchorc** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Hint: Something that last more than 12 weeks*

3. **scerninges** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Hint: Tests to keep you healthy*

6. **dominateti** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Hint: Breathing deeply and concentrating on something positive*

Answers: 1. Scam 2. Mental health 3. Screenings 4. Flu shot 5. Chronic 6. Meditation

**Inside...** *Managing Chronic Pain Differently*