



CHOICE
Health Plans

Member News

VNSNY CHOICE Total (HMO D-SNP) Member Newsletter

Spring 2021



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What You Need to Know About the COVID-19 Vaccines

Should I get vaccinated?

Yes. We encourage people to get the vaccine as soon as they are eligible. All available vaccines (Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson) are very good at protecting you, your family and community from getting COVID-19.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes. Many countries and companies worked together to develop the COVID-19 vaccines. Each vaccine went through extensive studies and trials. The FDA and safety boards reviewed data from these trials at every stage.

Are there any side effects?

The vaccines do not contain COVID-19 so you won't get sick from it. It's normal to have mild side effects like soreness in your arm, feeling tired or even a slight fever. This is a sign that your body is building protection against the virus and they usually go away after a few days. Serious side effects are very rare.

How does the vaccine protect me against getting sick from COVID?

It tricks your body into thinking you have the virus. If you're exposed after you've been vaccinated, your immune system will attack the virus and destroy it.

Why do people need to get two shots of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines?

The **first shot** kicks your immune system up to a certain level. The **second booster** shot, given 3–4 weeks later kicks your immune system to an even higher level. You need to get both shots of the same vaccine to be fully protected.

COVID-19 Eligibility and Appointment Resources:

- New York City residents should call or visit
 - o NYC Vaccine Hotline: 1-877-VAX-4NYC (1-877-829-4692)
 - o www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-vaccines.page
- New York State residents should call or visit
 - o New York State COVID-19 Vaccination Hotline: 1-833-NYS-4-VAX (1-833-697-4829)
 - o covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/

Advocate for Your Best Health

If it's been a year or more since your last check-up, it's time to schedule an **in-office** visit with your primary care provider (PCP).

Here's how to prepare for your appointment:

- Ask about the guidelines used in your doctor's office to protect against COVID-19 (masks, distancing, hand-washing).
- Take your medications with you.
- Write down your questions and concerns.

Talk to your doctor about:

- Blood pressure, height and weight checks.
- Cancer screenings—colon and rectal cancers, mammogram, and a pap smear for cervical cancer, as recommended by your doctor.
- Blood tests for cholesterol, and diabetes (HbA1c) — leave the office with a prescription for blood work if it wasn't done during the visit.
- Vaccines:
 - COVID-19
 - Flu and Pneumonia
 - Shingles
 - Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis
- Your mental health.



- What your treatment plan is and what your next steps are. If you are confused about anything, ask before you leave.

Before leaving the office, make a follow-up appointment.

As soon as you get home, schedule lab tests and imaging exams and pick up new prescriptions.

Use your office visit as a chance to talk about your health and advocate for yourself and your well-being.

Review the **Healthy CHOICE, Healthy You** rewards program to see where you can earn reward dollars for completing health activities, including screenings/tests as recommended by your doctor.

Be on the Lookout for Two Important Member Satisfaction Surveys

1. You may be asked to complete (by mail or telephone until early May) the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Provider & Systems Survey (CAHPS). The CAHPS measures your satisfaction with services from VNSNY CHOICE Total (HMO D-SNP), your Medicare and prescription drug plan.
2. You may also be asked to complete a Member Satisfaction Survey (by mail) that measures your satisfaction with the services you receive from the long-term care part of your health plan. It will come from the Island Peer Review Organization (IPRO), on behalf of the New York State Department of Health.

And remember, these surveys are anonymous and will not impact your benefits in any way.

We thank you in advance for participating in these surveys and for being a member of CHOICE Total. If you have any questions call 1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711), 7 days a week, 8 am – 8 pm to speak to a member of your Care Team.

Managing Diabetes for Good Health

You can live well with diabetes by using these strategies. Always check with your doctor before starting anything new.

Testing Your Blood Sugar is an important part of diabetes care. Use your testing meter to check as often as your doctor recommends. Write down your blood sugar readings to share with your doctor at your next visit.

See your doctor at least annually and get an HbA1c test (semi-annually), which measures your 3-month average blood sugar.

One way to keep your blood sugar and weight in a healthy range is the **Diabetes Plate Method** (described below).

- Fill **half** your plate with non-starchy vegetables like broccoli or spinach, which will not raise your blood sugar very much.
- Fill **one quarter** of your plate with lean protein like fish, turkey, tofu or chicken.
- Fill **one quarter** of your plate with a healthy grain like brown rice or carbohydrates like squash or potato/yams. These foods raise your blood sugar the most, so limit them.

Want to learn more about the Diabetes Plate Method? Go to diabetesfoodhub.org/articles.

Drink Water or unsweetened tea, club soda or flavored zero calorie beverages.

Pay Attention to Your Mental Health – Activities like breathing deeply, taking walks, and connecting with people who bring you joy, are all important to improving your overall health.

A Team That Truly Cares

At VNSNY CHOICE we work hard to take care of you! Rest easier knowing that you have an entire **Care Team** to help answer questions about your health plan. So that you always know we are a **team** of **caring** people dedicated to helping you use your health plan to live well in your own home, we are changing our name from Member Services to **CHOICE Total Care Team**.

We haven't changed anything about the care you get. We simply want to highlight that you have a **whole team** to help you with questions about CHOICE Total.

So, when you call us, the voice on the other end may answer with "Care Team". You will always be treated with respect, compassion and empathy. In fact, most times, the person who picks up the phone in our call center can answer your question on the spot. If not, the agent will know how to move forward to find a solution.

Your **Care Team** is available at 1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711) from 8 am – 8 pm, 7 days a week.

Important 2021 Benefit Change Reminder

As of January 1, 2021, service limits have been removed on physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT) and speech therapy (ST) visits. That means, from VNSNY CHOICE covers all medically necessary PT, OT and ST visits that are ordered by a doctor or other licensed professional.

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

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 disposicion servicios gratuitos de asistencia linguistica. 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
Health Plans

VNSNY CHOICE

220 East 42nd Street, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10017

www.vnsnychoice.org

CHOICE Total Care Team:

1-866-783-1444 (TTY: 711)
8 am – 8 pm, 7 days a week

TRANSPORTATION REMINDER

To schedule transportation, call 1-877-718-4219 (TTY: 711) at least 48 hours in advance 8 am – 8 pm, Monday – Friday.

If Something Seems Wrong, Tell Us.

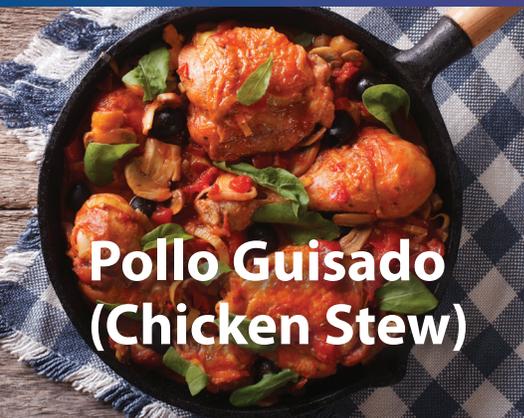
VNSNY CHOICE is committed to finding and stopping fraud, waste or abuse in our health care plans.

Anonymous Reporting

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



CHOICE
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**Pollo Guisado
(Chicken Stew)**

This yummy one-pot meal comes together in about an hour, combines flavorful chicken, healthy veggies and pantry-staple spices that ramp up the flavor. And, it's budget, heart and diabetes-friendly. (Serves 4)

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive or vegetable oil
- 2 lbs bone-in chicken thighs, legs or breasts (or a combination)
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken stock
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 bell pepper (any color), small onion, large carrot, thinly sliced
- 1 medium potato (cut into 1-inch cubes)
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 29 oz canned, no salt added, diced tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ tsp oregano or cilantro
- 1 bay leaf

Directions

1. Add oil to a medium pot and heat over medium heat for 1 min.
2. Add chicken to the pot and brown for 4–5 min on each side.
3. Add lemon juice, garlic and herbs – heat to combine.
4. Add bell pepper, onion, carrot, potato, tomatoes, and cook on medium-high heat for 5 min or until tender.
5. Add chicken, stock, cover and simmer until vegetables are cooked through (about 45 min). Remove bay leaf before serving.
6. Serve with brown rice or beans and/or with salad.

Enjoy!

Inside... Advocate for Your Best Health