



# Controlling asthma just got easier

Your local pharmacy can fill a three-month supply of all long-term controller medicines for asthma. This may help you save a lot of time and money. It may also mean fewer trips to the doctor or the drug store for refills.

Now when you fill any asthma long-term controller medicine for one month, the next time, you can get a three-month supply of the same medicine at the same copay for a 30-day supply.

**Thank you for the steps you've already taken to stay healthy such as:**

- Seeing your doctor regularly for checkups.
- Avoiding asthma triggers.
- Taking your medicines as directed.

What questions do you have about your asthma medicines? Write them here and take them with you to ask your doctor or pharmacist the next time you see him or her: \_\_\_\_\_

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You can also call Member Services at 1-800-300-8181 (TTY 711) and ask to speak with the Pharmacy department.



[www.empireblue.com/ny](http://www.empireblue.com/ny)

Member Services: **1 800-300-8181** (TTY 711)

What medical questions do you have? Call the 24/7 NurseLine: **1 800-300-8181** (TTY 711)

**Inside: Would you like to be tobacco-free?**

# Would you like to be tobacco-free?

You can be tobacco-free. And we want to help you succeed. But before you decide to quit using tobacco, it's important to explore your readiness for making a change.

Ask yourself the following questions. Put a check next to the statements that are true for you:

## How do I feel about taking action?

- I want to stop using tobacco, but I don't really know how.
- I want to stop using tobacco, and I feel confident I can.
- I can stop using tobacco, but it's not really a concern for me right now.
- I don't know how to stop using tobacco, and I'm not worried about it.

## Why do I want to quit?

- I want to breathe easier and cough less.
- I want to have more energy.
- I want to save money.
- I want a healthier heart and healthier lungs.
- I want to taste and smell foods better.
- I don't want to expose others to secondhand smoke.
- I want my car, home and clothes to smell better.

If you're ready to quit and need support, call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at **1-866-NY-QUITS** or **1-866-697-8487**. To learn more about smoking cessation benefits covered by your health plan, call **1-800-300-8181** (TTY 711). By calling, you can get:

- Free support and advice from a quit coach.
- A free tobacco quit kit.
- Self-help materials.
- Nicotine replacement products.
- Coping strategies for dealing with cravings and withdrawal.



## How much do you really know about HIV?



Most people know you can get HIV from having unsafe sex. But many people don't know that sharing needles to inject drugs puts you at high risk for HIV infection. If you or your partner are using drugs, please talk to your doctor about how to get help to stop.

Also, if you are living with HIV, regular checkups can help you stay healthy. As you may already know, a regular checkup is recommended at least every six months.

### Call your doctor today!

If you need help finding a doctor, scheduling a visit or getting to and from your appointment, call Member Services at **1-800-300-8181** (TTY 711). At this checkup, your doctor will:

- Do a physical exam.
- Check your viral load and CD4+ cell count.
- Prescribe or adjust your medications.

## How can we help you?

If you need help with learning more about HIV and how to stay healthy, Case Management services are free. Please call **1 888 830-4300** (TTY 711) 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday. You can also visit [www.empireblue.com/ny](http://www.empireblue.com/ny).

### Additional resources:

Call **311** (NYC Information Line) for:

- Non-enrolled sexual or needle-sharing partners to find out about confidential sexually transmitted disease (STD) services provided by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.
- Referrals to needle exchange programs, where clean needles are available.

## What is long-acting reversible contraception (LARC)?

LARC is birth control that works as well as sterilization but is not permanent. It includes intrauterine devices (IUDs) and the contraceptive implant. Here are some benefits of LARC:

- Can be used by most women
- Highly effective
- Decreases unintended pregnancy rates

Speak with your gynecologist/obstetrician about long-acting reversible contraception and which option is right for you.

For more information on Maternal Child Services offered by Empire BlueCross BlueShield HealthPlus, call **1-888-743-3508**. You can call us from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

## What is an early elective delivery?



Early elective delivery is a scheduled birth by induction or cesarean section (C-section) between 37 and 39 weeks of pregnancy that is not medically necessary. Infants born before 39 weeks are more likely to be hospitalized in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). They also are more likely to have complications such as:

- A brain that's not fully developed.
- More NICU admissions.
- More respiratory distress syndrome (RDS).
- More need for ventilator support.
- Newborn feeding problems and other transition issues.

In addition, the mom may have more risk of infection, injury to other organs and infertility. Speak with your doctor about your delivery and learn more about how an early delivery (before 39 weeks) can affect you and your baby's health.



# What does **quality** mean to you?

Quality, in terms of health care, is about making sure you get the best possible care when you need it. Quality is our focus at Empire. We want you to know some things about how it fits into your life. Empire takes a close look at data that tells us things about the care you receive. This data is like a report card for us and for our network providers.



## Diabetes care:

For example, if you have diabetes, we look to see that you are having your blood drawn every three to six months to check the average blood glucose or blood sugar level. This is called a Hemoglobin A1c test or HbA1c test. This test measures your blood sugar control over a three- to six-month period. It is used along with home blood sugar testing to adjust your diabetes care plan.

Are you seeing an eye doctor each year for your dilated retinal eye exam? During this exam, your eye care specialist examines your retina and optic nerve for signs of damage and other eye problems. Your doctor can recommend an eye doctor that can do this test. If you need a referral, you can call Empire Member Services at **1-800-300-8181** (TTY 711). These tests, along with others, will help you and your doctor keep a close watch on your diabetes.

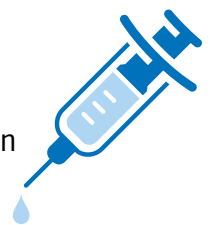


## Follow up after mental health-related hospitalization:

If you've been hospitalized for treatment of mental illness, be sure to schedule a follow-up visit within seven days of discharge. Follow-up care lowers your chances of another hospital stay. It can also help detect side-effects or other problems resulting from new medications or treatment.

## Childhood immunizations (vaccines/shots):

How well is your child protected from the most serious childhood illnesses? About 83 percent of our Empire children had all of their shots by age 2. Let's work together to have 100 percent of our children immunized. If your child is not protected against these diseases or has missed any shots, please make an appointment with his or her doctor today.



## Use of appropriate asthma medications (asthma care):

If you have asthma, it's important to take your medications. You may not have any symptoms. You may feel fine. But remember, asthma does not go away. There is no cure. Asthma is a long-term condition that makes it hard to breathe. It may cause chest tightness, shortness of breath and coughing. Keep a supply of all your prescriptions and take all your medicines as advised by your doctor, even when you are feeling well. Visit your doctor. Build a strong partnership with him or her to help manage your asthma.



## Breast cancer screening:

Routine mammograms (X-rays of the breast) can help detect breast cancer early when it is most treatable. Many times, early detection results in better outcomes. As with many other diseases, your risk of breast cancer goes up as you age. Regular breast cancer screening is important for all women. But even more so for higher risk women – age 40 and over. If you have a higher risk of breast cancer, ask your doctor about getting a mammogram.

## HEDIS scores

Empire tracks these measures and others that are important to your care using a tool called Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set or HEDIS®. This data is collected by looking at claims your provider sends to us along with results of your lab tests and any other services done in your provider's office. Empire wants to make sure you have access to care, get good care and are satisfied with that care. Here are some results from our HEDIS measures in 2015 compared to national benchmarks:

Service	2015 measurement year	National benchmark
Diabetes HbA1c testing	93%	92%
Diabetes retinal eye exams	66%	63%
Follow-up after hospitalization for mental health	62%	58%
Childhood immunizations (vaccines)	83%	83%
Use of appropriate asthma medications (asthma care)	80%	81%
Breast cancer screening	75%	71%

The chart shows the percentage of Empire members who got preventive services as compared to the average Medicaid rate for the nation. We want every member to get the care he or she needs to stay well. But we cannot do it without you! We encourage you to get to know your doctor. Talk about any medical, physical or emotional concerns you have no matter how small you may think they are.



Empire would like to share some of the outreach activities we do to make sure you're up to date with the latest information regarding your health care.

- **Clinic Days:** Onsite visits with members in provider offices to share preventive health information, programs and services.
- **Community health workers:** Health coaches who assist members with navigating health plan benefits as well as accessing providers, health plan services and community resources.

What can you do to manage your health care? See your doctor and follow the plan of care you decide on together. Reach out to us for help with making an appointment by calling **1-800-300-8181** (TTY 711).

# Empire 2015 member satisfaction survey

We want you to be satisfied with your health care.



Each year, we ask a random group of members questions like:

- How easy it is to get an appointment with your doctor or specialist?
- Do you feel that you are getting the care you need?
- How well do we provide customer service?
- How would you rate our health plan overall?

This survey, called the CAHPS survey, helps us make changes to serve you and your family better. In 2015 we saw some changes to our CAHPS survey scores.

TOPIC	2015 RESULTS	2014 RESULTS
Health plan overall	78%	80%
Personal doctor overall	73%	80%
Specialist overall	76%	81%
Getting care quickly	75%	79%
Getting needed care	75%	77%
Customer service	84%	86%

Here's a closer look at the areas we measure.

## Health plan

Your satisfaction is important to us. Even though our health plan's overall rating only dropped slightly, we need to hear from you. We want to know how we can improve our services and increase your satisfaction. If you get a survey in the mail or a call asking for feedback about our health plan, please complete it. Your opinion counts!

In addition to surveys, we hold meetings several times a year where we ask for advice through our **Member and Consumer Health Advisory Committee (MCHAC)**. The meetings ask for your ideas on ways we can improve member satisfaction. Members are randomly invited to the meetings. If you are interested in participating or want to know more about the meetings, please call Member Services at **1-800-300-8181** (TTY 711).

## Personal doctor

Having a relationship with your personal doctor is vital to your health. Your doctor or primary care provider (PCP) should spend enough time with you, listen carefully to you and show courtesy and respect for what you say. Your PCP should also value your cultural differences or any special needs you have.

Our provider directory has up-to-date information on all the providers in our network, including PCPs, specialists, hospitals and other providers. If you need help finding a provider, you can go to the provider directory online at **[www.empireblue.com/ny](http://www.empireblue.com/ny)** or use the search tool to search by provider type, location or name. You may also request a printed copy by calling Member Services at **1-800-300-8181** (TTY 711).

If you are between the ages of 22 to 26 and wish to transition to an adult care primary care physician, please call the customer service number on the back of your member ID card.

## Getting an appointment with a specialist

Empire has worked hard to make improvements in this area. We routinely look at our network of providers to make sure we have enough specialists. We also include information about standard appointment scheduling times in member newsletters and our member handbook and on the member website at [www.empireblue.com/ny](http://www.empireblue.com/ny).

## Getting care quickly

Making sure you get the care you need quickly is important to helping you stay healthy. Getting care quickly means you can get an appointment and care as soon as you need it. Through programs such as My Health Direct, we hope to improve your access to care and make it easier for you to get in to see your provider. My Health Direct lets us work with providers to block time in their schedules just for Empire members.

## Customer service

We know how important it is to get the help and information you need. Over the years, we've focused greatly on customer service because we want to make sure your questions are answered and you're satisfied when you contact us for any reason. Although our scores decreased slightly in customer service, we're still committed to meeting your needs. We provide ongoing training and updated information to all our associates. We strive to be number one. Giving you excellent customer service and treating you with courtesy and respect is our goal.

## Getting needed care

Empire scored slightly lower in making sure members get needed care, but we're still committed to helping you get the care you need. When you're not sure where to go, call our 24/7 NurseLine at **1-800-300-8181** (TTY 711). Speak to a nurse about whether urgent care, a visit to your doctor or a trip to the ER is needed.

You can request a copy of the Empire Quality Management Program Evaluation. Please call **1-212-563-5570** and ask for the New York Quality Management department.

### Empire member handbook

Your member handbook has information on:

- Your rights and responsibilities.
- Our privacy practices.
- Member benefits and how to get medical care.
- Preventive and behavioral health care.
- How we decide the level of care and service you need based on your coverage and how to reach the staff with questions.
- How you can learn more about managing diseases and chronic problems.
- Eligibility, criteria and self-referral for case management.
- Access to staff.
- Our 24/7 NurseLine.
- Our utilization management decisions to approve or deny your request for medical treatment are based only on the appropriateness of care and service and your benefit coverage. We do not reward our providers or other individuals for denying your request for services. There are no financial incentives that would affect their decision.

The handbook is also on our website at [www.empireblue.com/ny](http://www.empireblue.com/ny).





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## Need a doctor?

To get the most up-to-date information about our plan's network providers in your area, you can visit [www.empireblue.com/ny](http://www.empireblue.com/ny) or call our Member Services department at **1 800-300-8181** (TTY 711). You can also call Member Services to request a hard copy of our provider directory. Some network providers may have been added or removed from our network after this directory was printed. Please call Member Services to report any discrepancies or errors with information listed in the provider directory.

*My Health* is published by Empire to give information. It is not a way to give personal medical advice. Get medical advice directly from your physician.

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