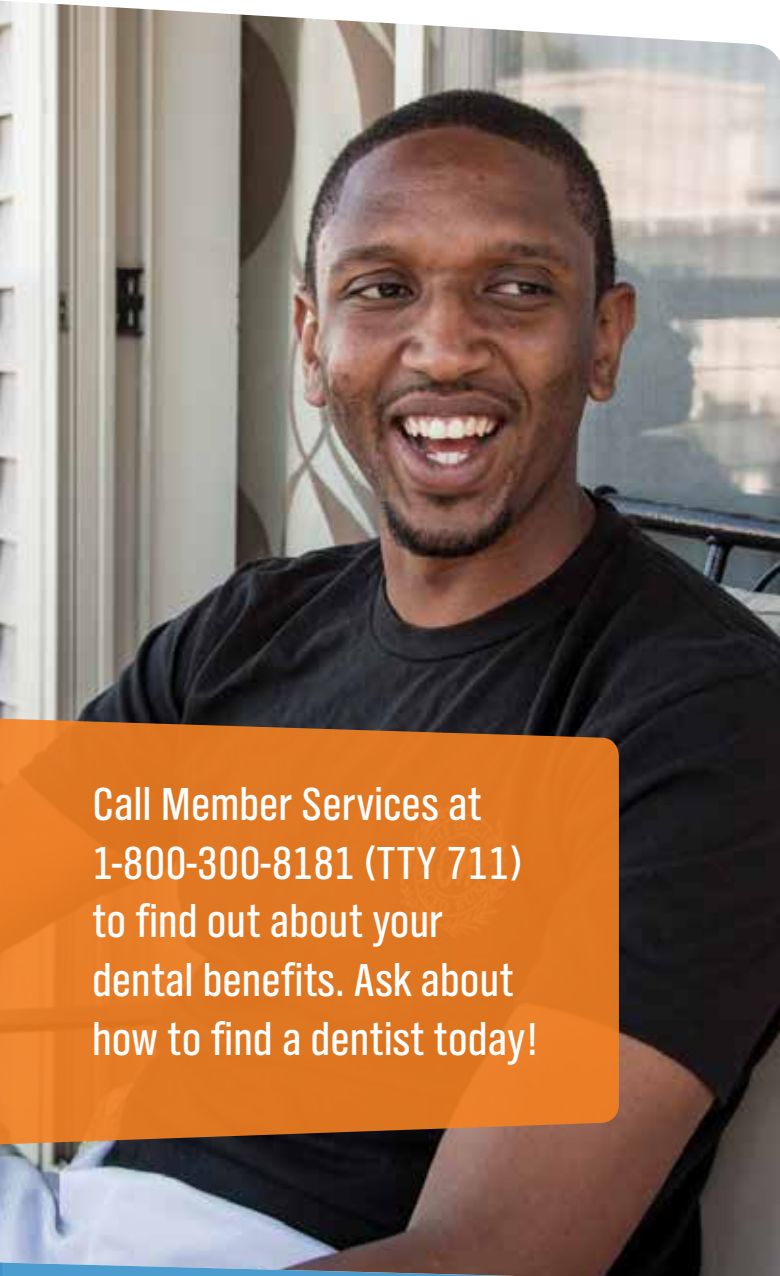


A healthy mouth matters



What does the health of your mouth have to do with the health of your body? The answer is a lot, according to the American Dental Association. In fact, gum disease may be linked to conditions like heart disease and stroke. It can lead to premature labor in pregnant women and make it harder for people with diabetes to control their blood sugar.

So what can you do to keep your teeth and gums healthy?

Follow these four simple steps:

1. Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
2. Floss your teeth at least once a day.
3. Eat healthy foods to help avoid cavities.
4. Visit your dentist twice a year.

During a visit to the dentist, your teeth will be cleaned and examined. The dentist can also teach you about how to take care of your teeth.

Source:
www.ada.org/sections/scienceAndResearch/pdfs/patient_61.pdf

Call Member Services at
1-800-300-8181 (TTY 711)
to find out about your
dental benefits. Ask about
how to find a dentist today!

Women's health matters

Why do women often put the needs of others above their own? Their families, their jobs and even their friends come first. This is a great way to be. But it can also be harmful when it comes to women's health.

If you're a woman, there are important steps you can take to care for yourself. Staying healthy will help you continue to do the things you love with the people you love.

One of the most important steps you can take is to go for recommended health care screenings and services.

Use the following chart to see what services you may be due for:

Screening	Age to Start	Frequency	Reason for Screening/Exam
Pap test and pelvic exam	21 years of age or younger if sexually active.	Every 1 to 3 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helps find cervical cancer early when it is most treatable.• Test for sexually transmitted diseases or other reproductive problems.
Mammogram and breast exam	50 years of age or sooner, depending on risk factors.	Every 1 to 2 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• X-ray to check for breast cancer.• One of the best ways to find breast cancer early.
Colon cancer screening	50 years of age and older.	Every 10 years or sooner, depending on risk factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Looks for polyps or other growths inside colon.• Helps find cancer in its earliest stages.

With all types of cancer, the sooner you find it, the better your chances of survival. These screening tests are the best ways to do just that. It can also bring you peace of mind to know you are healthy.

Don't wait!

Which screenings on the chart are you due to receive? Don't wait to schedule it. Call your health care provider today to make an appointment!



Stay ahead of the flu

Protecting yourself from the flu is easy.

As an Empire member, you can get a flu shot:

- From your primary care provider (PCP).
- At one of our network pharmacies, if you're age 18 or older.
- At your local health department.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) wants everyone six months of age and older to receive the flu vaccine each year.



What are you likely to experience if you get the flu? What can you do to help stay healthy during flu season?

If you get the flu, you may:

- Feel bad for several days.
- Run a high fever.
- Have aches and pains.
- Develop complications that can lead to more serious illness, hospitalization or even death.
- Pass the flu on to other family members who may be more likely to get very sick.

You can protect yourself from the flu by:

- Getting a flu shot each year, which is the single best way to prevent infection.
- Washing your hands often.
- Avoiding those that have the flu.
- Eating well.
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Getting enough sleep.

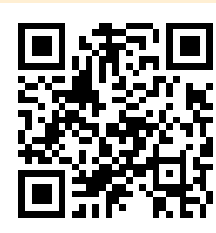
Seasonal flu may strike anywhere at any time. You can stay ahead of the flu by protecting yourself with the flu vaccine. Children and those people age 65 or older are usually most at risk.

How can you find out how active the flu is in your state or your city?
Go online to www.cdc.gov/flu or scan this image with your smartphone.

Sources:

www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6202a4.htm

www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccination/effectivenessqa.htm



The truth about Hepatitis C

- True or false:**
1. Hepatitis C is the most common blood borne infection in the United States?
 2. As many as 75 percent of persons infected with Hepatitis C don't even know they have it?
 3. Baby boomers, people born between 1945 and 1965, are most at risk?

The answer to each question is true. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now recommends a one-time screening for all people born between 1945 and 1965. In New York, a new law requires primary care providers to offer this screening.

What can I do if I find out I have hepatitis C?

- Learn as much as you can about hepatitis C.
- Talk to your health care provider about how to get the right care and monitor your liver disease.

Hepatitis C is curable in many cases.

There are new medications available for treatment of the disease. Decisions about how and when to start treatment are based on many factors. Together you and your health care provider can decide if treatment is right for you.

Source:

https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/hepatitis/hepatitis_c/consumers/

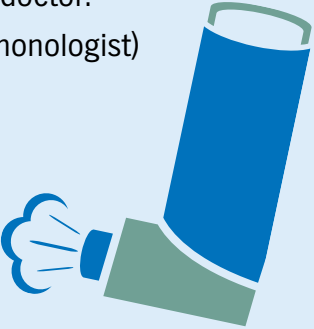
Preventive health care tips

What should you be concerned about?	What should you know?	When should you go for services?
Children		
ADHD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children need follow-up care and monitoring when first starting an ADHD medication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take your child for a face-to-face follow-up visit with the prescribing doctor within 30 days of filling the first prescription.
Immunizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children should be fully immunized by age 2. Immunizations are also required for children to attend day care and school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children should receive immunizations during well-child visits (from birth to 2 years of age). Additional immunizations are required during later years.
Well-child screenings (ages 0 to 12 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to taking your child to the doctor when he or she is ill or when there is an emergency, routine wellness visits are recommended to help keep your child healthy. Well-child visits include physical exams, as well as monitoring the growth and development of your child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk with your child's doctor to learn more about how many visits your child needs during their growing years.
Adolescent wellness screenings (ages 13 to 19 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual teen health checkups can help keep teens in good physical, mental and emotional health. During a health checkup, teens receive a complete physical exam and information about good nutrition and healthy lifestyles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk with your teen's doctor to learn how many visits your teen needs during their adolescent years.



What should you be concerned about?	What should you know?	When should you go for services?
Women		
Breast cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early detection is the best protection against breast cancer. Routine mammograms, or X-rays of the breast, can find lumps when they are too small to be felt by hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you're a woman ages 50 to 74, plan to complete a screening mammogram every two years. If you're a woman ages 40 to 49, talk to your health care provider about when to start and how often to have a mammogram.
Cervical cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cervical cancer is preventable and is one of the most successfully treated cancers when detected early. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women ages 21 to 65 years should visit a gynecologist or a primary care provider (PCP) for a pelvic exam and a Pap test. Talk to your provider about how often to have this screening.
Chlamydia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chlamydia is a very common sexually transmitted infection that can affect a woman's reproductive health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexually active women, especially those 25 years of age or younger, should visit their gynecologist or primary care doctor and get tested for chlamydia.



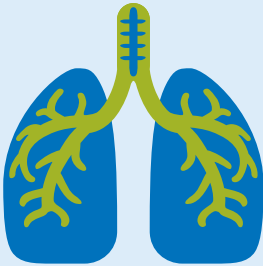
If you have a chronic condition, you should see your doctor **at least once a year**. If you would like to speak to a health educator at Empire, call 1-800-300-8181. Be sure to get the tests you or your child needs by the end of this year!


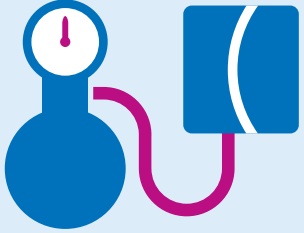
Chronic conditions		
Asthma	<p>Effective management of asthma can decrease the number of missed school and work days.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to your doctor about an asthma action plan. There are two main kinds of asthma medicine: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Rescue medications</i> (like albuterol) are taken when you have symptoms of asthma or an asthma attack. <i>Control medications</i> are taken every day, even when you're feeling well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk with your doctor about your asthma at every visit. Fill your prescription medications as instructed by your doctor. Visit a specialist (pulmonologist) as recommended by your PCP. 

Sources:

NYS DOH: www.health.ny.gov/healthaz/#B

NYS QARR: www.health.ny.gov/health_care/managed_care/reports/eqarr/2007/about.htm

What should you be concerned about?	What should you know?	When should you go for services?
Chronic conditions		
Body Mass Index (BMI)	<p>Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a person's weight and height.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining a healthy weight can decrease risks for diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, arthritis and cancer. A BMI test is used to screen for weight categories that may lead to health problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit your doctor every year for a physical examination. Discuss your BMI number with your doctor. If you have children: Talk to your doctor about how your child's BMI is calculated. 
Colorectal cancer screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colorectal cancer usually develops from abnormal growths, known as polyps, in the colon or rectum. Screening tests can find polyps and remove them before they turn into cancer. They can also find colorectal cancer early, when it is easiest to treat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For most men and women, colorectal cancer screening begins at age 50. Some people with a family or personal history of colorectal cancer or certain other conditions should start screening sooner. Talk to your health care provider about when to begin screenings.
Congestive heart failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to weigh yourself daily and report changes to your doctor. Be sure to take diuretics as prescribed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to your doctor about how often you'll need to be seen. 
COPD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's important to tell your doctor about significant changes such as breathlessness, wheezing or a more frequent cough, difficulty sleeping, no interest in eating, or changes in sputum production and color. Be sure you receive a Spirometry test (a special breathing test) when first diagnosed with COPD. Even if you feel well, keep taking your COPD medications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to your doctor about how often to go for screenings and follow-up visits. Ask your doctor about the benefits of breathing exercises and if pulmonary rehabilitation is right for you. Go over the instructions for taking your medications with your doctor or pharmacist. 

What should you be concerned about?	What should you know?	When should you go for services?
Chronic conditions		
Depression and mental health	<p>Severe mental illness can be debilitating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental illnesses, such as depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, are leading causes of disability in the United States. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you've ever been hospitalized because of a mental illness, it is very important to receive follow-up care immediately (within seven days) after you have been discharged from the hospital. Call your doctor or Empire BlueCross BlueShield HealthPlus for help making an appointment.
Diabetes	<p>It can cause serious health problems, such as heart disease and kidney disease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help prevent and control diabetes, you should be physically active, maintain a healthy weight, eat a healthy diet and take your medications as prescribed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hemoglobin A1c is a blood test that lets you know how well your sugar is being controlled. This test is needed two to three times a year. Have an eye exam (including a retinopathy screening test) and urinalysis once a year, or as recommended by your doctor. Have a cholesterol test done once a year. If you have Type II diabetes, you should have a urine test when you're diagnosed and then every year thereafter. This test checks for kidney damage. 
Hypertension	<p>High blood pressure is the single most important risk factor for stroke.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only way to tell if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked. Normal blood pressure should be less than 120/80 mm Hg for an adult. Blood pressure above 140/90 mm Hg is considered high. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit your doctor and get your blood pressure checked regularly. If you are taking blood pressure medicine, it is important that you take it according to your health care provider's instructions. 

How much does smoking cost you?



When you choose to smoke, there is a cost. It comes to your health and your wallet. Let's explore what you're getting by smoking and what you're giving up.

List the benefits you get from smoking:

What are the possible health costs?

- Bad breath, which might become permanent.
- Problems with taste or smell.
- Yellow teeth and fingernails.
- Changes in the skin of your face, which can become dry, dull and lose its natural smoothness.
- Early wrinkles around the eyes, mouth and lips, especially for women.
- Higher risk of developing lung disease, cancer or heart disease.
- Other: _____

What are the monetary costs?

Smoking isn't cheap. This chart estimates the costs:

If you smoke this much every day ...	It will cost you this much every year...
½ of a pack	\$1,066
1 pack	\$2,011
2 packs	\$4,022

Based on a price of \$5.51 per pack, what is smoking costing you each year? \$ _____

Source:
[Smokefree.gov/health effects](http://Smokefree.gov/health_effects)

What are some other things you could spend that money on?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If you're ready to quit, there are lots of people and resources to help you! As part of your health plan benefits, we've **expanded our coverage** to include **eight smoking cessation** counseling sessions **within one calendar year**.

Here are some details about these benefits:

- Visits must be face-to-face with a physician, registered physician assistant, registered nurse practitioner or licensed midwife.
- As many as two (2) of your total counseling sessions can be provided by a dental practitioner.
- Counseling can take place during individual or group counseling sessions.

Ask your primary care provider (PCP) to help you create a plan for quitting smoking. You can make an appointment with your PCP and discuss the options, including the use of patches and medication.

To learn more

about stop-smoking programs, you can:

- **Call 311**, the Take Care New York Intake Line for details of programs available to the public, including literature on smoking cessation.
- **Call the New York Quitline** at 1-866-NY-Quits 1-866-697-8487).

When do I need antibiotics?



Antibiotics are medicines used to treat bacterial infections and keep them from spreading. But if a virus makes you sick, antibiotics won't work.

Use antibiotics:

- Only when your doctor prescribes them.
- To treat a bacterial infection such as strep throat, pneumonia and some sinus infections.
- As prescribed by your doctor, which usually means taking all of the medication until it is gone.

Do not use antibiotics:

- To treat viral infections, colds, the flu, runny noses, most coughs and bronchitis, sore throats not caused by strep, or most upper respiratory infections.
- Prescribed to someone else for another illness or prescribed to you for a previous illness.

Whether you have a bacterial infection or a viral infection, there are things you can do to help yourself feel better.

- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer.
- Take medication as prescribed without skipping doses.
- Use saline nasal spray to relieve congestion.
- Soothe a sore throat with throat spray or lozenges.

A sore throat, also called pharyngitis, is very common in children, but it's not very common in adults. Health care providers can do a quick test to determine if antibiotics are needed to treat a sore throat. Proper treatment can help you feel better faster and prevent spreading it to others.

Your doctor can perform a quick test (swab the back of the throat) to find out if your sore throat is caused by bacteria or a virus. Just looking at your throat is not enough to make a diagnosis. If the test is positive, your health care professional can prescribe antibiotics.



Antibiotic resistance

Overuse of antibiotics can lead to antibiotic resistance. If you take antibiotics when they are not needed, it can make it harder to treat future bacterial infections. You may be sick for longer periods of time. Ask your doctor about over-the-counter medicines that may help reduce symptoms. For more information about antibiotic use, visit www.cdc.gov.

Making decisions on care and services

Sometimes, we need to make decisions about how we cover care and services. This is called Utilization Management (UM). Our UM process is based on the standards of the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). All UM decisions are based on medical needs and current benefits only. We do this for the best possible health outcomes for our members. We also don't tell or encourage providers to underuse services. And we don't create barriers to getting health care. Providers do not get any reward for limiting or denying care. And when we decide to hire, promote or fire providers or staff, we don't base it on that they might or we think they might deny or would be likely to deny benefits.

Our Notice of Privacy Practices

This type of notice explains how medical information about you may be used and disclosed by Empire. It also tells you how to access this information. The notice follows the privacy regulations set by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). If you would like a copy of our Notice of Privacy Practices, please call Member Services at the phone number listed on your ID card or go online to www.empireblue.com/nymedicaid.



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