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## Grand Street Medical Office

### A legacy of caring

When is a doctor's office more than just a doctor's office? Perhaps it's when it has a 50-year history of caring for area residents. Or when the staff is not just doctors, but respected and valued neighbors. Or maybe it's when the facility is thought of as a stronghold of the community. When the doctor's office is Manhattan's Physician Group's Grand Street Office, all of the above apply. Despite its small size, the office's faithful service to the Lower East Side has left its mark upon the area and its community.

Alla Zilberman, MD, head of Family Medicine at the Grand Street Office, says that in addition to the office's long-standing presence in the community, it is its willingness to meet the needs of patients that makes the office, and its doctors, so beloved within the community. "The Grand Street Office is one of the very few medical offices in all of the five boroughs that are open every



New York Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (center), a neighbor and supporter of the Grand Street Medical Office, welcomes HIP CEO Anthony Watson (left) and HIP VP for Group Practice & Facility Oversight Sunny Chiu to the newly refurbished facility.

Sunday," notes Dr. Zilberman. "We try to make our appointments as convenient as possible for both sick and well visits."

Other steps the office has taken to meet the needs of patients include late hours on some weekdays and reserving time on Saturdays for treating acute care needs. "We make sure to set aside some time to focus on the simple aches, pains, wears and tears of the neighborhood," Zilberman adds.

Patients are also reaping the rewards of the facility's recent "facelift." The new look includes an updated color scheme, carpeting, lighting and artwork. All help create a décor that one patient calls "relaxing and soothing."

The Grand Street Office, located at 570 Grand Street near the FDR Drive and the Williamsburg Bridge, counts longtime HIP member Robert Evans, Sr., and his family among the patients it has served during its five decades of operation.

A retired senior court officer, Mr. Evans, at 65, has lived on the same Lower East Side block for his entire life. For many years, he has trusted his family's health to the staff at the Grand Street Office. "I've been a HIP member for over 40 years," recalls Mr. Evans. "A HIP doctor delivered my son, and my son is now 41, so I've been a long-time member."

Mr. Evans Sr. has kind words for the staff at the Grand Street Office. He is especially fond of the office's doctors. "The office has some of the best doctors I've ever had," he exclaims. "Dr. Zilberman always makes time to see me. I never have to wait long for my appointments. She has a very warm heart and a great smile," he adds.

The doctors are so warmly regarded that they often receive holiday gift baskets and cards and letters from patients. For Dr. Zilberman, however, the most

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## Help Stop the ‘Super Bugs’!

### Take antibiotics the right way

“Super bugs” have been in the news a lot lately. These are the newer strains of bacteria that are not easy to kill. Experts believe that these drug-resistant bacteria are the result of overuse of antibiotics. When an antibiotic is prescribed



when not needed or when it is not taken the right way, bacteria develop a resistance to the antibiotic. Resistance is then passed on to the next generation of bacteria. This resistance means that many antibiotics don't work as well as they used to.

Some factors that add to antibiotic resistance are:

- **Misuse or overuse of antibiotics in humans, or in the farm animals and foods we consume.**
- **Failure to finish antibiotic prescriptions.**
- **Getting an antibiotic when it isn't needed.**

Unless we make changes, this problem will become much worse. So, how can you help? It begins with your visit to the doctor.

- **Only ask for an antibiotic if your doctor says it is the right treatment for your illness.**
- **If your doctor treats you with an antibiotic, be sure to finish the whole prescription, even if you feel better.**

- **Discard any remaining pills. Never save them to use in the future, or even worse, to give to someone else.**
- **Protect yourself from getting sick by washing your hands often and keeping your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes.**

By following these simple tips, you will help reduce the spread of “super bugs.” We're doing our part, too. In addition to telling you how to protect yourself, we're educating our doctors on the proper use of antibiotics, as well.

Source: Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics, [www.tufts.edu](http://www.tufts.edu)

## Danger—Lead!

Lead is a poison that is especially bad for children. If lead poisoning is not found early, children may suffer from brain damage, slowed growth or behavior problems.

Take these steps to reduce your family's exposure to lead:

- **Tell your landlord to fix peeling paint. It's the law.**
- **Wash floors, windowsills, hands and toys often.**
- **Avoid health remedies, eye make-up, candles, spices, candy, toys and jewelry from China and Mexico.**
- **Store foods from opened cans in glass or plastic containers, not the cans.**
- **Use lead-free dishes and food containers. Don't use any chipped or cracked dishes to store or serve food.**
- **Keep your child away from the work clothes and tools of household members who do construction work. Protect them from hobby materials that might contain lead.**
- **Use only cold tap water for making baby formula and for drinking and cooking. Let the water run for a few minutes to flush any lead from the pipes.**
- **Have your child's blood tested for lead at ages 1 and 2. Because children in early stages of lead poisoning may not look or act sick, be sure the doctor checks your child for possible lead exposure every year from 6 months to 6 years of age.**

Source: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov)

## Grand Street Medical Office

*(Continued from cover)*

touching show of support is the loyalty of area families. Mr. Evans's son, Robert Jr., currently lives in Queens, but continues to visit the Grand Street Office. He does so because of the very personal, attentive and familiar care he has always received.

"For me, it is a wonderful feeling when the child of one of our members becomes a member of our group later in life," says Dr. Zilberman. "I think it speaks volumes about how much our office and our community mean to one another."

The Grand Street Office is proof that a small medical office with limited staff can operate successfully and earn the faith and gratitude of the community. And with its fresh face, the office looks forward to faithfully serving many new generations of the Lower East Side with the same time-honored commitment to the neighborhood.

## Getting to a Healthy Weight

For many of us, keeping our weight in check is something we struggle with. And since the benefits of a healthy weight are so great, we need to keep at it. Once we reach our goal weight, we'll lower our risk of developing high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and even many cancers. We'll also improve our mood and have more energy!

Since most people put on a pound or two every year, the first goal should be to stop gaining weight. After that, try to get your weight to a healthy level. Ask your doctor what your ideal weight should be. Healthy weight loss means losing no more than one or two pounds each week. To lose one pound a week, cut 500 calories each day. To lose two pounds a week, cut 1,000 calories each day. Keep a food log so that you'll know the high-calorie foods to eliminate.

These quick tips can help:

- 1. Choose healthy foods and eat smaller portions. Check out the information at [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) and create your own healthy eating and activity plan.**
- 2. Be more active. Choose activities that you enjoy. Do them with a friend to stay on track.**
- 3. Skip drinks with high sugar content. Switch to water or unsweetened drinks.**
- 4. Turn off the TV. You'll be more active and eat less junk food.**
- 5. Think before you eat. Don't fall into the trap of eating out of boredom or due to stress.**

For more weight-loss information and tools, visit [http://www.hipusa.com/myhealth/preventive\\_health/eating\\_healthy\\_tips.asp](http://www.hipusa.com/myhealth/preventive_health/eating_healthy_tips.asp).

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration, [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

## Dignified Decisions

During advanced illness, patients often have to make important personal, financial and health care decisions — all at once. These decisions often leave them overwhelmed, confused and unsure of where to turn. HIP can help make sense of it all.

Our Dignified Decisions program can guide you through the difficult process of planning end-of-life care. Specially trained staff are available to provide coordinated care, compassionate support, guidance and comprehensive education.

You don't have to face advanced illness alone. Call **1-800-447-8557** or e-mail [dd@hipusa.com](mailto:dd@hipusa.com) to request information or speak to someone about the full range of options available to members with advanced illness.



## Don't Be a Heart Attack Waiting to Happen

### Nine risk factors you can control

If you think family history is the biggest risk factor for heart disease, think again. The nine risk factors for heart disease below account for 90 percent of heart attack risk and many of them can be controlled through lifestyle changes.

- 1. Ratio of LDL to HDL cholesterol levels.** To reduce your risk for heart attack, decrease your LDL and increase your HDL cholesterol. High levels of LDL cholesterol are associated with a high fat diet and an inactive lifestyle. To lower LDL, avoid high fat dairy products, fatty meats, baked goods and fried foods. To raise HDL levels, speak to your doctor about an exercise program. If changes in diet and exercise don't bring about the desired results, your doctor may need to prescribe drugs that lower your cholesterol.
- 2. Smoking.** Smoking as few as one to five cigarettes daily increases heart attack risk by 38 percent! You can lower your risk of heart disease and stroke by not smoking and avoiding secondhand

smoke. To learn more about our free telephone-based smoking cessation program, see the back cover of this newsletter.

- 3. Diabetes.** If you have diabetes, working with your doctor to maintain tight control of your blood sugar significantly decreases your risk of having a heart attack. A healthy diet is essential for preventing and controlling diabetes. To learn more, visit [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com)<sup>®</sup>.
- 4. High blood pressure.** High blood pressure is easy to detect and treat. But first, you need to "know your numbers." This means visiting your doctor regularly to have your blood pressure checked. It also means creating a plan for controlling your blood pressure that includes diet, exercise and, if you smoke, quitting. If lifestyle changes don't bring your blood pressure to normal levels, your doctor may need to prescribe medication.
- 5. Abdominal obesity.** Why does location of body fat matter? Because abdominal fat contains hormones that can lead to diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol — three risk factors for heart disease. To lose abdominal fat, make changes in your diet and activity levels. Speak to your doctor first.

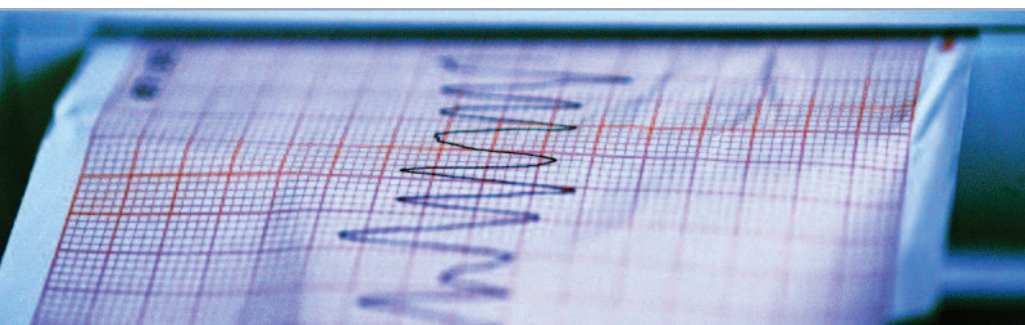
## Coronary Artery Disease

Controlling the risk factors listed at left can also help prevent or delay Coronary Artery Disease (CAD). But it's important that you see your doctor *regularly* to keep track of your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels, review your medications, and personalize your treatment plan. HIP offers several disease management programs to help members diagnosed with diabetes, congestive heart failure and CAD. Speak to your doctor about the program(s) that may be right for you\* or call **1-888-881-3112**. To learn more about CAD, visit our Web site: [http://www.hipusa.com/myhealth/chronic\\_conditions/cad.asp](http://www.hipusa.com/myhealth/chronic_conditions/cad.asp).

\* Program eligibility is based upon coverage and confirmed diagnosis.

- 6. Alcohol.** Modest amounts of alcohol reduce a man's heart attack risk by 12 percent and a woman's by 60 percent. "Modest amounts" mean no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women. Too much alcohol can have the opposite effect and promote heart disease, cancer and alcoholism.
- 7. Fruits and vegetables.** A diet rich in fruits and vegetables helps improve your blood pressure, your cholesterol and your weight. Fruits and vegetables are rich in nutrients, high in fiber and low in calories. Try to eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

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## Don't Be a Heart Attack Waiting to Happen

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**8. Exercise.** Moderate exercise reduces a man's heart risk by 23 percent and a woman's by twice that amount. And we're not talking about running marathons! Even walks in the park, when done on a regular basis, can improve cholesterol levels, prevent diabetes and promote blood vessel growth.

**9. Stress.** Chronic unresolved stress and depression nearly triple heart attack risk. The good news is that treatment is usually effective. Talk therapy has shown favorable results and is often used along with medication. Whether you need stress management strategies or feel that you may be depressed, help is available. Call **1-888-447-2526** to discuss the best behavioral health treatment options for you.

Have you discussed your risk factors for heart disease with your doctor?

- **If yes, have you and your doctor discussed the risk factors you can modify, treat or control by changing your lifestyle or taking medicine?**
- **If no, set up a visit with your doctor to discuss your risk factors for heart disease.**

Source: American Heart Association, [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)



## Recognizing a Stroke

Few Americans know the symptoms of a stroke. Be prepared to get medical help quickly if you have symptoms — even if they last for only a few seconds. The effects of a stroke are serious, but fast treatment may result in a better recovery. New treatments can reduce the damage caused by a stroke for some victims, but these treatments need to be given soon after the symptoms start.

Most symptoms of a stroke come on suddenly. If you notice the following symptoms, don't wait. **Call 911 right away, if you have sudden:**

- **Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg — especially on one side of the body.**
- **Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.**
- **Trouble seeing in one or both eyes.**
- **Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.**
- **Severe headache with no known cause.**

Recognizing symptoms of a stroke and acting fast to get medical attention can save a life and limit disabilities.

A stroke can happen to anyone. People of all ages should be periodically screened for stroke risk factors, which means screening for diabetes, high blood pressure, blood cholesterol, heart and circulation problems, and monitoring one's height, weight and body mass index (BMI). Talk with your doctor today about your stroke risk factors. By finding out what they are, you and your doctor can develop a personalized treatment plan to reduce your chances of having a stroke.

To learn more about strokes, including steps you can take to prevent them, talk to your doctor or visit our Web site at <http://www.hipusa.com/webmd/guides/stroke/index.html>.

Sources:  
 American Stroke Association:  
[www.StrokeAssociation.org](http://www.StrokeAssociation.org)  
 National Stroke Association:  
[www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org)



## Become an Organ Donor

We encourage you to consider signing up as an organ donor. There are currently approximately 100,000 people across the country on transplant waiting lists—including 7,000 in New York. In many cases, organ donation offers them a second chance at life.

HIP members who live in New York state can participate by signing the organ donor section of their New York driver's license (or non-driver ID). Or they can enroll in the New York State Organ & Tissue Donor Registry. If you decide to sign up, discuss this decision with your family, since consent from "next of kin" is required for all medically suitable organ and tissue donors.

To learn more about organ donation and to enroll in the New York State Organ & Tissue Donor Registry, visit [www.donate.lifeny.net](http://www.donate.lifeny.net).

Source: Donate Life America

## How to Live a Longer, Healthier Life

We all want to be as healthy as possible. But there's so much health advice going around that it can be hard to know what's most important. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene wants to make it simple. They offer 10 steps you can take now to live a longer and healthier life.

- 1. Have a regular doctor.** Get regular care to help stay healthy.
- 2. Be tobacco-free.** Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- 3. Keep your heart healthy.** Keep your blood pressure, cholesterol and weight at healthy levels to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other diseases.
- 4. Know your HIV status.** Get tested for HIV. Reduce risky behaviors and use condoms to protect yourself and others.



### 5. Get help for depression.

Depression can be treated. Talk to your doctor or a therapist.

- 6. Live free of dependence on alcohol and drugs.** Get help to stop alcohol and drug abuse. Recovery is possible. Most adults are able to drink safely, and many may benefit from

moderate alcohol consumption. Drinking moderately means no more than one or two drinks a day, and never more than four.

### 7. Get checked for cancer.

Colonoscopy, mammograms and Pap smears save lives.

### 8. Get the immunizations you need.

Everyone needs to be vaccinated, regardless of age. Ask your doctor if you and your family are fully protected against diseases like tetanus, hepatitis B, flu and pneumonia.

### 9. Make your home safe and healthy.

Strive for a home that is free of violence and hazards.

### 10. Have a healthy baby.

Planning pregnancy helps ensure a healthy mother and a healthy baby.

Want to learn more about the health of your community? The 2006 New York City Community Health Profiles capture the health of 42 New York City neighborhoods.

They also serve as a resource for improving the health of New Yorkers, community by community. Log on to <http://home2.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/tcny/tcny01.shtml> for more information.

Source: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov)

## Cabrini Medical Center Closes

Cabrini Medical Center, at 227 East 19th Street in Manhattan, closed on March 14, 2008 for all services except hospice care and outpatient behavioral health services. If you use Cabrini Medical Center for hospice care or outpatient behavioral health services, you may continue to do so. If you used Cabrini for any other service, you must change to a new center to continue care.

HIP can help you transition to a new medical center. We have a large network of doctors, hospitals and medical centers located throughout New York City. Talk to your primary care physician (PCP) to find out which other hospitals and medical centers you can use. If your PCP was located at Cabrini, please contact HIP Customer Service at **1-800-HIP-TALK** for help in selecting another location. If your specialist was at Cabrini, please contact your PCP for a referral to a new participating specialist.

If you have questions, call HIP Customer Service at **1-800-HIP-TALK (1-800-447-8255)**, Monday through Friday, 8 am to 6 pm. If you have a hearing or speech impairment and use a TDD, call **1-888-HIP-4TDD (1-888-447-4833)**, Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm.

## How to Release Your Personal Information

Since April 2003, all health plans are required by law to protect the privacy of members' personal information. We do not share your data with anyone, except as the law permits. If we need to share it in any other way, we must get your written permission.

To release your information or authorize someone to act on your behalf or assist you in interacting with us, we need your written permission stating:

- **The name of the person allowed to receive your information.**
- **The time period he or she may receive it.**
- **The reason for allowing this person to receive your information.**

The Privacy Regulations are quite strict. Any request not meeting the Federal Privacy Rule guidelines will not be accepted.

HIP has created a special form for the release of your information. It is called the Authorization to Use or Disclose Protected Health Information form. You may request this form by calling **1-800-HIP-TALK (1-800-447-8255)** and using the Forms and Literature menu of our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. Or you may print the form from our Web site, **hipusa.com**<sup>®</sup>. If you have questions about releasing your personal data, just call **1-800-HIP-TALK** and speak with a Customer Service Advocate.

Please know that we make keeping your information safe our highest priority.

## Women's Wellness

### No Referral Required

As a reminder, your HIP coverage includes:

**Pap Test:** An annual pelvic exam and Pap test for women age 18 or older. No referral is required.

#### Screening Mammogram:

- **Women at any age are covered for a mammogram if their doctor recommends it and:**

- They have a history of breast cancer.
- They have a first-degree family member (parent, sibling or child) with a history of breast cancer.

- **Women 35 to 39 are covered for one baseline mammogram.**

- **Women 40 or older are covered for one mammogram every calendar year.**

You don't need a referral from your primary care doctor to visit a participating OB/GYN or to have an annual screening mammogram at a HIP participating facility.

To locate a participating OB/GYN or mammography facility, ask your PCP, visit **hipusa.com**<sup>®</sup> or call **1-800-447-8255**, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 6 pm. If you use a telephone device for the hearing or speech impaired, please call **1-888-447-4833**.

## Nota

Si usted desea una traducción al español de estos artículos, puede recibirla escribiendo a: HIP Customer Service Department, 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041-8190.

## Your External Appeal Rights\*

If you and your doctor ask for a medical service and HIP denies coverage for that medical service because we say that it is not medically necessary, or that it is experimental, investigational, or out-of-network, New York state law gives you the right to ask the New York State Insurance Department (NYSID) for an external appeal. This means that NYSID-approved clinical experts will review your appeal. They may overturn HIP's decision in whole or in part. Or they may uphold HIP's denial of coverage. Their decision is binding on both you and HIP (except for Medicaid and Family Health Plus members, as described below).

To appeal to NYSID, you must first complete HIP's appeal process. You have **45 days** after you receive our final decision on your appeal to ask for an external appeal. If you and HIP agree to skip our appeal process, you must ask for the external appeal within 45 days after the agreement with HIP is made.

The denial letter we send you, called our Final Adverse Determination (FAD), will include **an external appeal** application. To ask for an external appeal, fill out the application and send it to NYSID. They will tell you when an external appeal agent is assigned to your appeal. You and your doctor must send any information to the agent **right away**. Once the agent makes a decision, additional information will not be considered.

Keep in mind:

- **To file an external appeal when services are denied as experimental, investigational or a**

**clinical trial, you must have a life-threatening or disabling condition or disease and your doctor must complete and send pages 4-7 of the application to NYSID.**

- **To file an external appeal when services are denied as out-of-network, you must be covered under an HMO or managed care insurance contract and a preauthorization request must have been denied because the out-of-network service is not materially different from an alternate in-network service. Your doctor must complete and send pages 4-7 of the application to NYSID.**
- **To request a fast-tracked appeal, your doctor must complete pages 4-7 of your application and state that you have not received the treatment and a delay would mean a serious threat to your health. This is called an Expedited External Appeal.**

The fee for filing an external appeal is **\$50** and must be included with your application. It will be refunded if the external appeal is decided in your favor. This fee will be waived if you can show that you qualify for a hardship exemption. If you are a Medicaid, Family Health Plus or Child Health Plus member, no fee is required.

An external appeal agent must decide a standard appeal within **30 days** of receiving your application from NYSID. Five more working days may be added if the agent needs additional information. If the agent decides that the information submitted is materially different from that considered by the plan, the plan will have three more work-

ing days to change or affirm its decision. You and the plan will be notified within two working days of the agent's decision.

A decision on Expedited Appeals (those that have been fast-tracked) will be made **in three days**, even if not all medical information has been provided.

If you have questions or need help with an external appeal application, call NYSID at **1-800-400-8882** or visit their Web site, **www.ins.state.ny.us**.

In addition to the external appeal rights outlined above, Medicaid and Family Health Plus members may also ask for a fair hearing if HIP decided to deny, reduce or end coverage for a medical service. If you are a Medicaid or Family Health Plus member and you ask for a fair hearing and an external appeal, the decision of the fair hearing officer will be the one that counts. You can ask about the fair hearing process by calling **1-800-342-3334** toll free.

\*Please note that if you are a federal employee or a member for whom we provide only administrative services, the External Appeal Rights law does not apply to you. Also note that Medicare members have an external review process that is different than the one described above. Refer to your member handbook or call **1-800-HIP-TALK (1-800-447-8255)** for assistance.

Source: New York State Insurance Department, [www.ins.state.ny.us](http://www.ins.state.ny.us)

Effective December 15, 2005

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PRIVACY RIGHTS

# HIP NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THIS INFORMATION.

**PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.**

### SUMMARY

*This document contains an important message about the information we collect from you. Please read it before filing it with your other important papers.*

*The document describes:*

- *The kind of information we collect.*
- *The ways that we protect this information.*
- *How we use and share this information.*
- *Your rights, as a subscriber, regarding this information.*

*The document tells you that:*

- 👉 *HIP is required by federal and state law to protect the privacy of all personal and nonpublic information we collect from our subscribers.*
- 👉 *We collect this information – name, address, date of birth, Social Security number and the like – from enrollment applications, medical records, claim forms and other documents.*
- 👉 *We also collect income and asset information from Medicaid, Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and Healthy New York subscribers, as well as from Medicare subscribers applying for a Medicare savings program or*

*for a credit to help pay for prescription drugs through the HIP Medicare Approved Prescription Drug Program.*

- 👉 *We don't share any of the information we collect with anyone, except as permitted by law.*
- 👉 *We are permitted by law to share the information in the course of administering subscriber benefits.*
- 👉 *We are also permitted by law to share the information under the special circumstances described in this booklet.*
- 👉 *We have internal safeguards to protect the information we collect.*
- 👉 *Any organization we might share the information with in the administration of benefits is obligated to have internal safeguards as well.*
- 👉 *If we need to share the information in a way other than the law permits, we will do so only after obtaining the subscriber's written authorization.*
- 👉 *Questions about how we protect subscriber information may be directed in writing to: HIPAA Privacy Officer, HIP Health Plan of New York, 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041.*

*For details, please read the entire document.*

At HIP, which includes Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York, HIP Insurance Company of New York and Vytra Health Plans Managed Systems, Inc., we appreciate the trust our members place in us and recognize the importance of protecting the confidentiality of nonpublic personal financial and health information that we collect from them. We are required by law to maintain the privacy of this information and to keep accurate reports and records related to

providing health care benefits. We are also required by law to send you this Notice of Privacy Practices describing our legal duties and privacy practices related to the uses and disclosures of protected health information. For the purposes of this Notice of Privacy Practices, individually identifiable nonpublic financial and health information will be referred to as "protected health information."

## THE INFORMATION HIP COLLECTS

We collect protected health information about our members from the following sources:

- 1 Information we receive from eligibility and enrollment applications and other forms, including such items as name, address, date of birth, Social Security number, assets, income and tax returns. (We only collect asset, income and tax return information from individuals enrolled in the Medicaid, Healthy New York, Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus benefit plans we offer. We do not collect this information from individuals enrolled in the commercial or Medicare benefit plans we offer, except when a Medicare member is applying for a Medicare Savings Program or for a credit to help pay for prescription drugs through the HIP Medicare Approved Prescription Drug Program.)
- 2 Information about your transactions with us, our affiliated health care providers or others, including, but not limited to, claims for benefits, medical records and coordination of benefits information.

At present, we do not disclose any protected health information about our members or former members to anyone except as permitted by law. If we were to do so in the future, we would notify you of such a change in policy and advise you of your right to instruct us not to make such disclosure.

## SPECIAL TREATMENT OF YOUR PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

HIP will not disclose any of your protected health information without your written authorization, unless such disclosure is permitted by law. Protected health information is individually identifiable information that we maintain relating to the provision of your health care, such as:

- 📁 Your medical records.
- 📁 Claims payment information.
- 📁 Health care visit and treatment patterns.

We have developed an authorization form that we will send to you to obtain your authorization to disclose your protected health information when authorization is required before information is shared. The form describes the purpose for which the information is to be used, the time period during which the authorization form will be in effect, and your right to revoke authorization at any time. The authorization form requires your signature or the signature of your duly authorized representative before we will disclose any of your protected health information.

In addition, we use a special authorization form for the release of HIV and AIDS information to comply with New York State's requirements for the release of this information.

## PERMITTED USES AND DISCLOSURES OF HEALTH INFORMATION

The law permits HIP to disclose protected health information about you without your written consent or authorization when such disclosure is necessary to assist us with providing your health care benefits. We may disclose protected health information about you to our affiliates as well as to nonaffiliated third parties for assistance in the administration of claims and other services necessary for the provision of your health care benefits. When we hire other organizations to provide support services, we require them to conform to our privacy standards and to allow us to audit them for compliance. In all instances, HIP will disclose the minimum necessary protected health information that the circumstances require. Here are some examples of when we may disclose information:

### Treatment and Disease Management

HIP will disclose your protected health information to health care providers in the coordination of your health care or related services.

HIP may use or disclose your health information to provide you with preventive care reminders and to advise you of possible treatment options or disease management programs you may be interested in.

For example, we may send you information about programs for smoking cessation, weight loss or remote heart monitoring for congestive heart disease.

### Payment

HIP may release protected health information about you, including copies or excerpts from your medical records, for the purposes of determinations of coverage, the adjudication or subrogation of health benefits claims, billing, claims management, medical data processing or reimbursement. HIP may also communicate to subscribers decisions related to payment and benefits that may contain protected health information about covered dependents.

### Health Care Operations

HIP may use or disclose protected health information about you in the process of routine operations of the organization related to health care, such as quality assurance, utilization review, internal audit, accreditation, certification, credentialing or routine insurance activities. In addition, we may disclose protected health information about you to arrange for care coordination or community services (e.g., the delivery of meals to your home).

### Business Associates

HIP may use and disclose certain protected health information about you to business associates who perform an activity on our behalf that requires the use or disclosure of protected health information. Some examples of business associates include consultants, accountants, lawyers,

pharmacy claims adjudication providers and delegated entities. HIP will enter into agreements with business associates with specific provisions to ensure that the appropriate safeguards are maintained to prevent any improper use or disclosure of protected health information, and that members' rights to access, amend and obtain an accounting of disclosures of their protected health information are maintained.

### **Regulatory and Law Enforcement Authorities**

HIP may also disclose certain protected health information to a variety of regulatory or law enforcement authorities. For example, HIP may share information with insurance and health oversight agencies, such as the New York State Department of Health and Department of Insurance, in the course of audits, inspections, licensure or disciplinary proceedings. We may also share information for law enforcement purposes as required to respond to a subpoena or court order, or to locate a suspect, a material witness or a missing person. We may share information for certain types of public health or disaster relief efforts, such as with the Food and Drug Administration's investigating a prescription drug or with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's tracking a communicable disease. In addition, we may share information with the appropriate governmental authorities in reporting instances of child abuse, neglect or domestic violence. Finally, we may share information related to a deceased person to a medical examiner or funeral director, as necessary, to carry out their duties, or with the appropriate institutions, as necessary, for organ, eye or tissue transplant.

*Other uses and disclosures of protected health information that are not included in these general categories will be made only with your written authorization, which you may revoke in writing at any time, unless HIP has already taken action based on the authorization or the authorization was a condition of obtaining the health insurance. Once you give us authorization to release your health information, we cannot guarantee that the person to whom the information is released will not disclose the information.*

### **DISCLOSURES TO PLAN SPONSORS**

HIP may disclose summary health information that is not individually identifiable to a plan sponsor, if the summary health information is sought for the purposes of obtaining premium bids or modifying, amending or terminating the group health plan coverage. We may also disclose enrollment and disenrollment information with the plan sponsor.

HIP may also disclose protected health information to a plan sponsor for the purposes of performing administrative functions, but only when the employer agrees to certify that processes are in place to safeguard the confidentiality of this information. The health plan document itself must also reflect these certifications.

These certifications will record the plan sponsor's agreement to:

- ☞ Not use or disclose the information other than as permitted by the plan or law.
- ☞ Ensure that any agent or subcontractor will maintain these same protections and restrictions on the use of the information as required by the employer.
- ☞ Not use the information for employment-related actions and decisions related to employee benefits.
- ☞ Report any uses or disclosures of the information that are inconsistent with these certifications.
- ☞ Make available the protected health information to those individuals who are entitled to such information.
- ☞ Permit individuals to amend the protected health information as permitted by law.
- ☞ Provide an accounting of disclosures of information as required by law.
- ☞ Make available its internal practices and records related to the protected information to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to determine compliance.
- ☞ If feasible, return to HIP, or destroy, all protected health information when it is no longer needed.
- ☞ Ensure that there is adequate separation between HIP and the employer (restricting access to certain designated employees and providing a mechanism for resolving issues of noncompliance).

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND SECURITY OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION**

We restrict access to your protected health information to those HIP employees who need to know that information in order to provide services to you. We maintain physical, electronic and procedural safeguards that are designed to ensure the privacy of our members' protected health information. Employees who violate our data security policies are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **YOUR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION**

Members and their authorized representatives are granted specific rights related to protected health information. Your rights with respect to your health information include the right to:

- ☞ Request restrictions on certain uses and disclosures of your health information. (HIP will try to honor your requests, but we are not required to agree to a requested restriction.)
- ☞ Receive confidential communications of protected health information by reasonable alternatives or at alternative locations. (Again, we will try to honor such reasonable requests. However, we must accommodate

reasonable requests to receive health information by a reasonably alternative means if you state in your request that the disclosure of the information could endanger you.)

- ☞ Upon written request, inspect and copy your health information in your “designated record set,” which includes medical, billing, enrollment, claims adjudication and case management records. (Please note that the denial of access to certain information may be required or permitted by the applicable laws and regulations, such as psychotherapy notes, information compiled in connection with a civil, criminal or administrative proceeding, or information subject to federal laws governing biological products and clinical laboratories.)
- ☞ Obtain access to your protected health information within 60 days of the request, unless additional time is required and permitted. Denials of access to protected health information will be made in writing, and you may request a review of any denial of access to protected health information.
- ☞ Amend protected health information. We may require that you submit your request in writing and provide a reason for your request. We will respond to your request within 60 days after we receive it and may extend the time by an additional 30 days, if required. If we make the amendment, we will notify you that it was made and provide the amendment to any person whom we know has received the information, as well as other people identified by you. If we deny the request to amend, we will notify you in writing of the reason for the denial and advise you of your right to file a written statement of disagreement. Your statement, at your request, may be included with your information for future disclosures.
- ☞ Upon written request, receive an accounting of disclosures of protected health information. Please note that we are not required to provide an accounting of the following:
  - Any protected health information collected prior to April 14, 2003.
  - Any information shared for treatment, payment and health care operations purposes.
  - Information disclosed pursuant to your authorization.
  - Information disclosed for national security or intelligence purposes.
  - Information disclosed to correctional institutions.
  - Information disclosed to law enforcement officials or health oversight agencies in response to a request for a temporary suspension of an accounting.
  - Information disclosed as part of a limited data set for research, public health or health care operations purposes.

- Incidental or unavoidable disclosures that occur as a result of a permitted disclosure.

We will attempt to respond to your request for an accounting within 60 days, unless an additional 30 days are required. We will provide you with one free accounting every 12 months.

A fee may be charged for any additional accountings within a 12-month period, and you will be advised in advance of the fee and permitted an opportunity to withdraw or amend your request.

- ☞ Revoke authorization to use or disclose protected health information, except to the extent that action has already been taken based upon the authorization.
- ☞ Obtain a paper copy of this notice, even if you have agreed to receive notices electronically. You may also view a copy of this notice on our Web site at [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com)®.

### COMPLAINTS AND INQUIRIES

Members may complain to HIP and the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services if they believe that their privacy rights have been violated. There will be no retaliation for filing a complaint.

Members wishing to file a complaint with HIP should submit their complaint in writing to: HIPAA Privacy Officer, HIP Health Plan of New York, 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041.

Members who wish further information on HIP’s Notice of Privacy Practices should call **1-800-HIP-TALK (1-800-447-8255)**. TDD: **1-888-HIP-4TDD (1-888-447-4833)**.

### CHANGES IN HIP’S NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

HIP is required to abide by the terms of this Notice of Privacy Practices as currently in effect. HIP reserves the right to change the terms of the notice and to make the new notice effective for all the protected health information that it maintains. Prior to implementing any revised notice, HIP will mail members copies of it. In addition, for the convenience of its members, but not as a substitute to the direct delivery described above, HIP will post the revised notice on its Web site, [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com).

## Member Rights and Responsibilities

### Rights

As a HIP member, you have the **right** to:

- Receive information about HIP, its services, its practitioners and providers, and your rights and responsibilities as a HIP member.
- Be treated with respect and dignity and in a way that is free from discrimination, no matter your age, sex, sexual orientation, race, national origin, religion, physical disability or medical condition.
- Have information about you and your medical care kept confidential, except in instances that the law permits HIP to share it or that you authorize us to release it.
- Receive quality health care.
- Obtain complete information about your diagnosis, treatment and prognosis, regardless of cost or benefit coverage, in a language you can understand. When it is not advisable to give such information to you, or when the member is a minor or incompetent, the information will be available to someone who has been designated to act on that person's behalf.
- Participate in decision-making regarding your health care, including the right to refuse treatment, to the extent permitted by law, and to be informed of the medical consequences of doing so.
- Receive all information that you need to give informed consent prior to the start of any procedure or treatment. This includes consenting to an order not to resuscitate, and to designate someone to give this consent if you are too ill to do so.
- Access to your written medical records as described by New York state law.
- Express concerns and voice complaints about the care and services provided by doctors and other providers and have HIP investigate and respond to them.
- Voice grievances about HIP, file an appeal or external review, and recommend changes in benefits and services to HIP staff and management or the New York State Departments of Health or Insurance, without fear of reprisal.
- Make recommendations regarding HIP's member rights and responsibilities policies.

### Responsibilities

As a HIP member, you have the **responsibility** to:

- Supply complete and accurate information about your medical history and health, to the extent possible, so that HIP participating providers can render appropriate care.
- Be actively involved in your own health care by seeking and obtaining information, discussing treatment options with your physician and making informed decisions.
- Participate in understanding your health issues and in developing mutually agreed upon treatment goals, to the degree possible.
- Follow through with agreed upon treatment plans and your provider's instructions.
- Update your HIP record with accurate personal data, including changes in name, address and phone number, additional health carriers and an increase or decrease in dependents, within 30 days of the change.
- Treat with courtesy and consideration all HIP personnel and the staff of any HIP participating doctor's office or health facility to which you are referred.
- Abide by the policies and procedures of your participating physician's office, including those concerning keeping scheduled appointments, providing ample notice of cancellations, and paying copays at the time services are rendered.

## How Are We Doing?

Are you satisfied with your HIP membership? Are you receiving outstanding customer service? Are there ways we could serve you more effectively? Your answers to these questions will help us improve the way that we serve you.

To learn your views, we invite you to participate in one of our member forums. These meetings are a great way to share your experiences and ask questions of HIP management and Member Council representatives.

Any member may request an invitation to the forums, but due to space restrictions, we have to limit attendance. To ensure that the entire membership is well represented, we use criteria such as age, gender, location and type of membership when selecting attendees.

If you'd like to participate, call **1-800-447-6688** Monday through Friday, from 9 am to 5 pm, by October 17. The dates and locations of the forums are:

- **Thursday, October 23**  
6 – 8 pm      **Queens**
- **Tuesday, October 28**  
6 – 8 pm      **Manhattan**
- **Wednesday, October 29**  
6 – 8 pm      **Brooklyn**
- **Thursday, October 30**  
6 – 8 pm      **Bronx/Westchester**
- **Wednesday, November 5**  
6 – 8 pm      **Staten Island**
- **Thursday, November 6**  
6 – 8 pm      **Nassau/Suffolk**

If you are selected to participate in a forum, you will receive an invitation by mail.

## Case Management Services

We want you and your family to live life to its fullest, even if you have a serious illness, injury or condition. That's why we offer programs that assist members with chronic medical and behavioral health conditions to obtain the care and supportive services they need.

While your primary care physician (PCP) is the one who determines your care needs, HIP's case managers work closely with your doctor to help you make the most of your treatment. As part of HIP's case management program, registered nurses and social workers offer members and their families:

- **A better understanding of their disease or condition.**
- **A link between members and the doctors and nurses on their treatment team.**
- **A liaison with community agencies.**
- **A health care advocate.**
- **More personalized attention.**
- **Expert guidance for effective self-care.**

For conditions that call for a higher level of care coordination, HIP has case managers to help you get *the right care in the right setting*. If you think you may be a candidate for HIP's case management programs, speak with your PCP or call **1-888-447-5260, ext. 7361**. For Mental Health Case Management, call **1-800-447-0769**.

To learn more information about Case Management, visit the *My Health* section of [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com)<sup>®</sup>.

## Looking for a Doctor?

If so, you can use the *Provider Search* feature at [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com)<sup>®</sup> any time, day or night. To request a printed Provider Directory, simply call **1-800-HIP-TALK (1-800-447-8255)** and use the Forms and Literature menu of the interactive voice response (IVR) system. Or send us an e-mail request by clicking on *Contact Us* at [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com) and your directory will be on its way.

## If You Have a Hearing or Speech Impairment

HIP maintains a special telephone message relay system that helps us communicate with members who have hearing or speech impairments. Call **1-888-HIP-4TDD (1-888-477-4833)** toll free Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm.

You can also arrange with HIP to have a sign language interpreter present when you visit your PCP or for any regularly scheduled medical visit. Just call **1-888-447-4833** Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm and we'll be happy to make these arrangements for you.

## Osteoporosis

### Are you at risk?

Osteoporosis causes bones to become weak and brittle, making them more likely to break. It is a "silent disease" because often there are no signs or symptoms. People cannot feel their bones getting weaker. They may not know that they have osteoporosis until they break a bone. A person with osteoporosis can break a bone from a minor fall, or, in serious cases, from just a sneeze. Osteoporosis is a major public health threat for both men and women.

To optimize bone health among our members, HIP sends quarterly mailings to female members age 65 and over who have had a bone fracture but were never tested for bone weakening. Besides educating them about osteoporosis, we encourage them to talk with their doctor about Bone Mineral Density (BMD) testing. This painless test is similar to an X-ray. We're also reminding doctors to test their patients who fit these criteria. This health screening program will soon expand to include men who may be at risk for this disease.

For more information on osteoporosis and other health topics, visit our Web site, [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com)<sup>®</sup>.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## Support for Our Members with Diabetes

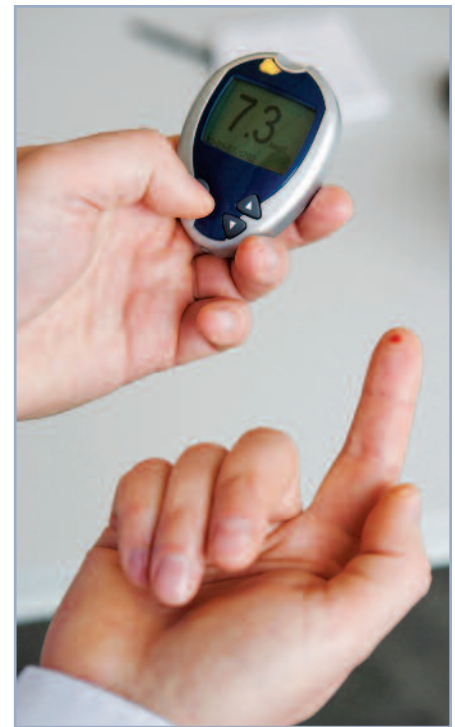
At HIP, we're committed to providing you with the information and support you need to take an active role in managing your diabetes. From time to time, we remind you of some important tests and exams that are recommended by the American Diabetes Association. We also remind your doctor when you're due for these tests so that he or she can use these them to monitor and manage your condition.

To further support our members with diabetes, HIP offers a disease management program called Positive Actions Toward Health (PATH). This free program for members\* age 18 and over can help you learn self-care strategies that can last a lifetime.

By enrolling in the PATH program, you'll receive:

- **One-on-one telephone contact with a professional Health Coach, for personalized support, health education and assistance in getting the services you need.**
- **Free educational materials on topics such as symptom management, health risks, treatment, diet, nutrition and more.**
- **Unlimited telephone access to a Health Coach for questions or concerns about your condition.**

The goal for managing your diabetes is to keep blood sugar levels under tight control. To achieve this goal, self-care skills are critical. The PATH program can help you learn:



- **The signs of very high and very low blood sugar levels.**
- **The drugs you need to control your blood sugar.**
- **How your doctor can tell you are controlling your diabetes.**
- **How to make sensible meal plans.**
- **How exercise affects your blood sugar levels.**
- **The lifestyle choices that affect your disease.**
- **What to do when illness strikes.**
- **How to lower the risk of long-term health problems.**
- **The role stress plays in managing your disease.**

If you'd like to enroll in PATH or learn more about the program, call **1-888-881-3112**.

\* Montefiore and MedAssurant members are not eligible for this program.

Source: American Diabetes Association, [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

## Have a Healthy Pregnancy

### See your doctor before you become pregnant

There is a lot to think about to prepare yourself for pregnancy. A visit to your OB/GYN before you get pregnant is an important first step. This visit will help ensure that you are healthy before you become pregnant so that you can give your baby the best possible start.

During this important visit, your OB/GYN will:

- **Examine you and ask questions about your health.**
- **Help you learn if you are healthy enough to start or expand your family.**
- **Suggest that you start taking special vitamins and extra folic acid (a B vitamin).**
- **Review any drugs you are taking and change any that would be unsafe for a developing baby.**

You should also discuss a planned pregnancy with any other doctor treating you for a chronic illness (like diabetes). Your doctors will work together to get you ready for pregnancy.

The best and safest time to learn about all of these things is before you get pregnant. This way, you'll give your baby the best conditions in which to start life and grow to be strong and healthy.

If you need help finding an OB/GYN, visit our Web site, [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com)<sup>®</sup>, any time. Use the Provider Search feature on the home page. You may also call **1-800-HIP-TALK (1-800-447-8255)** Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 6 pm.

To learn more about getting your body ready for pregnancy, log on to [hipusa.com](http://hipusa.com) and click on: *My Health, Women's Wellness, Mother and Child, Pregnancy Planning*. Or speak with your doctor.



### Join the Mom-To-Be program

The second step in having a healthy pregnancy is to join HIP's Mom-To-Be program once you are pregnant. You'll have access to a 24-hour question line during pregnancy and up to six weeks after delivery. This line is staffed by registered nurses who can help with pregnancy or breastfeeding questions, any time, night or day. When you enroll in the program, you also receive:

- **Three health assessments by phone to make sure your pregnancy is going well.**
- **Helpful materials by mail, including the book *Your Journey Through Pregnancy*.**
- **An online newsletter e-mailed to you.**
- **Access to a nurse case manager if your pregnancy is high risk.**
- **A reminder to choose a doctor**

**for your baby as your "due date" gets closer.**

- **A Toys "R" Us gift card for your new baby after seeing your doctor between 21 and 56 days after you deliver for your postpartum visit.**

Healthy pregnancies help babies get the best start! Call **1-888-447-0337** or **1-888-366-2229** now to enroll in the Mom-To-Be program.

### See your doctor after you deliver

Once you give birth, see your doctor within 21 to 56 days to make sure your body is healing well. This visit is your time to talk about how you're coping with your new role as mother, your health status and to discuss family planning. It's a good idea to set up this appointment with your doctor as soon as you get home from the hospital to ensure that your health and well-being are on track. Postpartum visits promote good health for both you and your family.

### Think about family planning

Family planning is always something you can discuss with your doctor. But right after you give birth, this topic may be on your mind. Family planning gives you more control over when you get pregnant and how many children you will have. If you choose, your talk with your doctor may include discussing which birth control method is right for you. It should also include talking about your life plan for building your family. Be sure to mention family planning at your postpartum visit and yearly checkups.

Source: March of Dimes, [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## Centers of Excellence Program

### Bariatric Surgery

HIP's Center of Excellence program began in 2007 with bariatric surgery. A Center of Excellence is a hospital that specializes in treating certain illnesses or performing certain treatments.

Bariatric surgery, also known as weight loss surgery, is a procedure on the stomach or intestines to help very obese people lose weight. It is usually performed on people who have a body mass index (BMI) above 40. It is also an option for people with a BMI between 35 and 40 who have health problems (like type 2 diabetes or heart disease).

HIP has assessed and determined that the following seven hospitals meet our standards and are therefore accredited as Bariatric Centers of Excellence:

- **Bon Secours Hospital**  
Peter Kwon, M.D.  
Phone: 1-845-692-8780
- **Lenox Hill Hospital**  
www.nycbariatrics.com  
Phone: 1-888-949-9344
- **Lutheran Hospital**  
Phone: 1-718-630-7000
- **North Shore University Hospital at Manhasset**  
Yvonne Castle  
Phone: 1-516-482-8657
- **NYU Medical Center**  
Beth Abrams  
Phone: 1-212-263-3237
- **Staten Island Hospital**  
Lisa Torres  
Phone: 1-718-226-1300



- **South Nassau Community Hospital**

Rajeev Vohra, M.D.  
Phone: 1-516-374-8650

To be named as a Bariatric Center of Excellence, a hospital must meet certain standards. These include:

- **The hospital must be accredited by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Or it must be a bariatric facility approved by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).**
- **The hospital must have a team that is experienced and committed to treating bariatric patients.**
- **The hospital must have specially equipped operating and recovery rooms and proper bariatric instruments and equipment.**
- **The hospital must provide long-term follow-up care. This includes rehab, mental health care, nutritional counseling and support groups.**

- **The hospital must do at least 125 bariatric surgeries yearly. All bariatric surgeons at the hospital must do at least 50 bariatric surgeries per year.**

- **Hospital bariatric surgeons must meet certain educational, certification or board eligibility requirements. They must also maintain an up-to-date knowledge of bariatric surgery.**

Once accredited as a Bariatric Center of Excellence, HIP reviews the hospital's performance and its surgeons every year.

If you would like to learn more about bariatric surgery, call any of the above Centers of Excellence for information.

## Quality Improvement Program Update

We are always working to improve the care and services you receive. We do this via ongoing quality improvement activities developed and overseen by our Quality Improvement Committee and Board of Directors. Some of these activities include:

- **Making sure that our members receive the highest quality of care.**
- **Making sure that aspects of care are linked and connected.**
- **Making sure that members get the right care and services based on their condition and benefits.**
- **Putting chronic care and health management programs in place to improve the health of members with certain conditions.**
- **Taking action to improve our HEDIS and QARR scores.\***
- **Improving Care Management, Pharmacy and Behavioral Health processes**
- **Partnering with our doctors to make sure that members obtain needed health checks and immunizations (“shots”).**
- **Monitoring complaints and appeals, as well as office visit availability and survey results to identify areas for improvement.**
- **Conducting activities that promote patient safety.**
- **Providing members with Web site tools to help them manage their benefits and make good**

**decisions about their health care.**

- **Providing services that meet the language and cultural needs of our members.**

This year’s program activities are geared to meet the health care needs of our members from infancy to old age. Specific initiatives include:

- **Childhood immunization and lead screening.**

To make sure that children two years old and younger have the recommended series of vaccines for their age and have their blood tested for lead, we send reminders to members via mail and phone. We also urge doctors to call any of their patients who have not received a vaccine or lead screening. Education on these two preventive health measures appears often in both our member and provider newsletters.

- **Teen screening, counseling and immunizations.**

Teens are at an age where they begin to make decisions by themselves. To raise awareness for making healthy decisions, we have asked our doctors to speak to our teen members about nutrition, weight control, exercise, sex, depression, and alcohol tobacco and substance use. We have also developed a teen health section on our Web site and have included a special teen insert with this newsletter. Please read this insert and share it with your teen.

- **Breast and cervical cancer screening.**

Early detection of breast and cervical cancer can greatly increase a

woman’s chance of survival. To remind women of the importance of screening, we remind members by mail and phone, plus we ask that our doctors strongly encourage mammography and Pap tests for their patients. We also send birthday card reminders and provide education regarding the importance of screening.

- **Colorectal cancer screening.**

Early detection of colon and rectal cancer can greatly increase a person’s chance of survival. We are working with our doctors to increase the number of members who are tested for colon and rectal cancer. Some of our members have been offered an FOBT (fecal occult blood test) kit that can be conveniently done at home. We are monitoring the outcome of this project before expanding it. In addition to educating our doctors, we are also providing education to all members on the importance of this screening through newsletter articles, Web site information and birthday card reminders.

- **Improving postpartum care.**

All new mothers need postpartum care to be sure that there are no problems recovering after delivery and to discuss postpartum depression and any other concerns they may have. It’s also a good time to discuss ongoing family planning. We have many initiatives to help remind women to make and keep their postpartum visit between 21–56 days after having their baby. The plan also monitors women for postpartum depression using the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale.

- **Controlling high blood pressure.**

To increase awareness about reg-

*(Continued on page 15)*

## Quality Improvement Program Update

(Continued from page 14)

ular blood pressure checks and to make sure that members follow their treatment plan, we include reminders in our newsletters and customer service “on hold” messages. We also reach out to members, and doctors whose patients are not taking their medication.

- **Osteoporosis screening in older adults.**

Many people do not realize that they have osteoporosis until they fracture their hip or wrist. Although more common in women, men can also have osteoporosis. For more about how we’re improving awareness and increasing testing for this disease, see “Osteoporosis: Are You at Risk?” on page 11.

- **Antidepressant medical management.**

To encourage members with depression to get treatment, our providers have screening tools to help them diagnose members during routine office visits. We also provide education to members and providers through our newsletters, disease management programs and on-hold messaging.

- **Drug safety for older members.**

Many older members are taking many different types of medications. We have developed programs that review the combinations of drugs that our members are taking to be sure that they are not harmful when taken together. Remember to always tell your doctor about all the drugs, including herbs and vitamins, that you are taking!

Please look for information on these and other HIP programs, as well as an update to our Quality Improvement Program, in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

\* HEDIS (Health Effectiveness Data and Information Set) is a program that scores health plans based on how their doctors provide care and services to their members. Since the data scored is the same for all health plans that participate, the results can be compared across the country. QARR is a similar program that scores only the health plans in New York state.

## Spotlighting Our Shining Stars

HIP would like to congratulate and thank **Julie Cortese** from ProHealth Obstetrics and Gynecology in New Hyde Park and **Giselle King** from the Queens-Long Island Medical Group, Woodbury Medical Offices for the excellent service they provide to our members. Here are comments from letters sent to us about Ms. Cortese and Ms. King:

*S.J. of Merrick writes, “I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a special person who went above and beyond the call of duty to help me. During my first trimester of pregnancy, I became very ill and home IV therapy was recommended for my condition. It was at this time that I met Ms. Julie Cortese. Words cannot express how grateful I am to Julie for her assistance in setting up the home IV therapy. She patiently answered my questions and I felt better just knowing that I had a good person handling my paperwork. Julie is truly an example of an excellent employee. Thank you again, Julie, for helping me; your kindness, compassion, dedication and hard work will always be remembered.”*

*E.N of Floral Park writes: “I’d like to bring to your attention a very fine*

*nurse who has been a big help to both my husband and me. Her name is Giselle King. Giselle, a chemotherapy nurse, started treating me seven years ago when I was undergoing chemo. A few years ago, my husband’s lung cancer was also treated with chemo — unfortunately, his results were not as good as mine and he passed away in June. We had talked about nominating Giselle as a Shining Star before his final illness. She is a blessing to all patients she deals with.”*

To recognize Julie Cortese and Giselle King for their caring and superior service, they have each been awarded a \$100 gift certificate.

### Tell Us About Your Shining Star

Is there a staff member in your doctor’s office that you’d like to acknowledge? Tell us about him or her! Mail your comments to Elizabeth Coriano, Provider Operations, HIP Health Plan of New York, 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041-8190. Or e-mail them to [providercomm@hipusa.com](mailto:providercomm@hipusa.com). Include your name, HIP ID number, address and daytime phone number. Your letter may be edited for length and clarity.



## Are You DEPRESSED?

It is common for teens to feel unhappy from time to time. However, unhappiness that lasts for a long time and causes you to be uninterested in being with friends or doing things you usually enjoy may be a sign of depression. Depression affects as many as one in eight teens. If you believe you may be depressed, talk with a trusted adult who can help you get treatment from a qualified mental health provider.

### CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

Teens become depressed for many reasons, including stress at school or at home, abuse, neglect and grief. Depression may also be caused by an inherited imbalance in brain chemistry. Depression tends to be more common in teens who have a family history of depression.

### SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

Major signs of teen depression are:

- Sadness.
- Use of alcohol or drugs.
- Not being able to sleep.
- Not being able to stop thinking about death and dying.
- Not wanting to be with others.
- Anxiety.
- Acting rebellious.

### TREATING DEPRESSION

Though depression is one of the most common mental health problems for teens, the good news is that there are several ways to treat it. Your therapist can decide the best course of treatment for you. It may include talk therapy, medication, or both.



To speak with someone privately about depression, members may call HIP Behavioral Health Services at **1-888-447-2526**. For more information, visit [www.webmd.com/depression/guide/teens-depression](http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/teens-depression).

Source: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

## Think Before You DRINK

Alcohol can be damaging or even deadly in high doses. For teens, alcohol is not only very harmful, it's illegal. Alcohol addiction can begin at any time in a person's life, but teen drinking increases the risk of addiction. About half of U.S. teens who start drinking alcohol before age 14 become addicted to it. Only 9 percent of those who wait until they turn 21 become addicted.

### LASTING DAMAGE

Drinking alcohol can be a social activity — people often drink to feel at ease or because others are drinking. But drinking because your friends are drinking can lead to problems, especially if binge drinking is involved. Binge drinking is having more than four or five drinks in about two hours and can be harmful in many ways, because you may:

- Become addicted.
- Have an accident leading to injury or death.
- Do lasting damage to your brain cells.
- Have severe liver damage.
- Get into trouble with the police.
- Do poorly at school and in sports.

### GETTING HELP

If you or a friend has a problem with drinking, it is very important to get help as soon as possible. Talk with a parent, friend, coach, teacher, spiritual adviser or anyone else you trust. Help is also available from:

- **American Council on Alcoholism Helpline:**  
1-800-527-5344  
[www.aca-usa.org](http://www.aca-usa.org)
- **Alcoholics Anonymous:**  
[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org)
- **Alcohol Hotline:**  
1-800-ALCOHOL (1-800-252-6465)
- **Nationwide Addiction Assistance Helpline:**  
1-800-559-9503

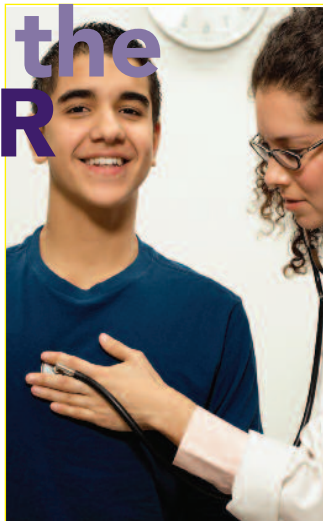
If you think you need help with your alcohol use, HIP members can get completely private help by calling HIP Behavioral Health Services at **1-888-447-2526**. To learn more, visit [www.webmd.com/mental-health/alcohol-abuse/teens-and-alcohol](http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/alcohol-abuse/teens-and-alcohol).

Source: [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

# Visiting the DOCTOR

Now that you're getting older, you can begin to take charge of your health. This means visiting the doctor at least once a year. If you have special health concerns or are already sexually active, you probably need to see the doctor more often. During your visit, your doctor will:

- Give you a medical exam.
- Give you shots, if needed.
- Talk to you about any health problems.
- Send you for lab tests, if needed.
- Provide other health care, if needed.
- Give you tips on how to stay healthy.



## GET A CHECKUP

When the doctor gives you an exam, he or she will usually check your blood pressure, height and weight, vision and hearing, and decide if all of your shots are up to date. Your doctor can also fill out any health forms that you need to get a driver's license, attend college, play sports or get a job. In addition, your doctor can answer many of the questions you have and talk to you about health issues that may be on your mind, such as:

- Help to quit smoking.
- Symptoms of STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and how to avoid them.
- Alcohol and drug use and abuse.
- How to handle emotional problems.
- Family violence.
- Stress, depression or anxiety.

If you are a girl, your doctor may talk to you about HPV (human papillomavirus). This common virus spreads though sexual contact. The HPV vaccine can prevent the most common types of HPV that cause cervical cancer and genital warts. This vaccine is usually recommended for 11 and 12-year-old girls, but those 13 through 26 who did not receive the vaccine when they were younger should get it, too. Ask your doctor if the HPV vaccine is right for you.

Your doctor will also give you important advice on what foods to eat and activities to take part in that will help keep you healthy.

Have you had a checkup this year? Call your doctor and set up a "well visit" today. For more information, visit [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics

# Don't Forget the DENTIST

In addition to visits to the doctor, regular visits to your dentist to check the health of your mouth and teeth are also important. Your dentist will suggest how often you need to have routine dental visits. You should probably see your dentist once or twice a year to have your teeth cleaned and checked for signs of decay, and your gums checked for signs gum disease. Your dentist may also look for impacted wisdom teeth and other oral health problems.



In addition to having regular dental visits, you should:

- Brush twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss at least once a day.
- Eat a healthy diet with lots of fruits and veggies and not too many sweets.
- Not smoke. Smoking and other tobacco use can lead to gum disease and other health problems.

To learn more, visit [www.kidshealth.org/teen/your\\_body/take\\_care/teeth.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_body/take_care/teeth.html).

Source: American Dental Association

HIP Today is published by HIP to inform members of current health issues and to improve the use of services. The articles in this publication are not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Please consult your physician to determine your personal health needs.



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## Quitting Smoking

### It's a bumpy ride

We know it's not easy to quit smoking. It's a bumpy road full of potholes to slow you down. But the Quit for Life™ program has helped people just like you quit for good. How? Expert Quit Coaches® teach you how to think differently, so that when you meet a bump in the road, you're ready for it. Enroll now and take advantage of all these services:

- Telephone support calls from a Quit Coach.
- A "quit kit" filled with tools to help you develop a plan to stop smoking.
- Unlimited access to a toll-free line to discuss concerns.

- Full coverage for nicotine patches, bupropion (generic Zyban®) and Chantix™.\*

- Access to Web Coach™, an interactive Web site where you can track your progress, chat with others trying to quit smoking, and more.

You can quit smoking. We'll teach you how. To enroll in the Quit for Life program, call 1-866-QUIT-4-LIFE (1-866-784-8454). For members with a hearing or speech impairment, the TDD line is 1-877-777-6534.

\* A copay may be applied to smoking cessation medications at time of purchase. HIP will reimburse members enrolled in the Quit for Life program for any copayment paid for smoking cessation medications. You may call the Quit for Life program for details about copayment reimbursement.