



CHOICE
Health Plans

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VNSNY CHOICE MLTC Member Newsletter

Winter 2022



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Preventing Falls this Winter

Most falls happen at home and are the leading cause of injuries for people over age 65 (National Council on Aging).

Your chances of falling are higher If you:

- Have poor balance or muscle strength
- Have chronic conditions like heart disease or diabetes
- Have clutter or poor lighting in your home

Avoid falling by:

- Increasing lighting and removing anything you could trip over, like:
 - Extension cords
 - Loose rugs
 - Shoes, boots, or umbrellas near your front door

- Wearing non-skid, rubber-soled shoes
- Installing handrails along stairs and safety grab bars in the bathroom
- Getting your sight and hearing checked regularly

Be Ready — Have a “Fall Plan”

- Choose someone who lives nearby and confirm that you can call them for help if you fall. Write down their number and give them a spare key.
- Carry a cell phone or Personal Emergency Response System (PERS) so that you can quickly signal you need help.

Feel safer by having a Fall Plan. It means you will be less likely to go to the emergency room or be admitted to the hospital.



VNS Health is Here! Reminding you that effective January 1, 2023, the name of your health plan is **VNS Health MLTC!** Mail you receive from us will include the new VNS Health logo.

Heart Health and Statins

Knowing the risk factors for **Heart Disease** and how you can reduce them can lead to a longer, healthier life.

You are at a higher risk for heart disease if you:

- Have high blood pressure or diabetes
- Are carrying extra weight and are inactive

You can help keep your heart healthy by:

- Seeing your provider regularly to manage chronic conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure
- Eating a diet rich in lean protein, fruits and vegetables
- Exercising at least 30 minutes on most days
- Not smoking and avoiding or limiting alcohol
- Managing stress and staying socially connected

Statins can be part of a heart-healthy routine

In addition to the lifestyle habits listed, the **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force** recommends people ages 40 to 75 at high risk for heart disease start taking a medication called a statin. Statins help lower “bad” cholesterol in your blood, which can help cut the risk of heart attack and stroke. Even if you have normal to slightly high cholesterol, taking a statin could keep you at a normal level.

Are statins safe?

Yes. The risks are low, and the possible benefits can be high. Talk to your doctor about whether taking a statin is a good option for you.

hopkinsmedicine.org; mayoclinic.org



It's NOT too Late to get your Flu Shot!

Flu season can last until spring. If you haven't already, get your flu shot now to protect yourself and your loved ones. Call your Care Team for a location near you.

Your Home Health Aide (HHA) – the Heart of Your Care

Your HHA is key to helping you live safely and independently in your own home. HHAs help with:

- Daily activities such as bathing, dressing, walking, shopping and making meals
- Helping you get in and out of a wheelchair or bed
- Checking your blood pressure, pulse, temperature, and breathing rate
- Making appointments, arranging transportation, and going with you to the doctor

It's important to remember that your HHA isn't there to give care to other family members, babysit or perform nursing services like wound care or injections.

Making the most of your relationship with your HHA

- Get to know your HHA so that you feel comfortable talking about your needs.
- Since your HHA follows your personal Care Plan, post a copy where you can refer to it often.
- Your HHA is there to help you stay independent, and will encourage you to do as much for yourself as possible.

Ways to Manage Chronic Pain

Nearly 20 million Americans have chronic pain affecting their daily activities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). Chronic pain **is any pain that lasts for at least three to six months.**

How does pain affect you? Pain can:

- Make it harder to move and get around, making you stay home and avoid doing things you enjoy
- Cause falls and injuries
- Interrupt sleep and cause anxiety and depression



homecareassistancejeffersonco.com

Ways to Stay Happy, not SAD

Even though it can happen at any time, feeling gloomy during winter is so common that it has a name. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is when you feel sad during the winter, though it can start in late fall and last until spring.

Here are common symptoms of SAD:

- Loss of interest in doing things you used to enjoy
- Wanting to be alone
- Trouble thinking clearly

You can protect yourself from the “winter blues” by:

- Focusing on your health, (i.e., getting an annual checkup)
- Taking a walk, getting some sun and exercising several times a week

Ways to manage chronic pain

Talk to your doctor about prescriptions and over-the-counter medications that may help. Here are four ways to manage pain and enjoy a better quality of life:

- 1. Move your body.** Stay as active as possible. Try walking in place, low-impact workouts, or chair-based exercises, using handheld weights.
- 2. Apply hot/cold therapy.** Alternate between heat and cold compresses. Cold reduces swelling and heat increases circulation.
- 3. Explore alternative treatments.** Acupuncture, chiropractic adjustments, meditation, and mindful breathing are a few to consider.
- 4. Reduce Stress.** Spend time trying to stay calm and connected to family and friends; keep a journal, engage in art, music or crafts.

Call your Care Team if you have any questions about managing chronic pain.

- Being with others can help with feelings of loneliness. Local senior centers or places of faith like churches, temples, and mosques are great places to meet like-minded people.

Get Support

- Reach out to your Care Team for referrals to community support services.
- If feelings of sadness or depression don't go away, see a behavioral health professional.
- Mental Health America has a support community called **Inspire** that supports anyone in need. Go to inspire.com/groups/ if interested.
- If you prefer talking on the phone, call **The Friendship Line** toll free at 1-800-971-0016 for a caring ear, and outreach services.



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New York, NY 10017

vnsnychoice.org

CHOICE MLTC Care Team

1-888-867-6555 (TTY: 711)
Monday – Friday, 9 am – 5 pm

TRANSPORTATION REMINDER

To schedule your transportation, please call 1-877-718-4220 (TTY: 711) at least 48 hours in advance, 8 am – 8 pm, Monday – Friday.

If Something Seems Wrong, Tell Us.

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

Anonymous Reporting

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



CHOICE
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Easy Dark Chocolate Bark



Dark chocolate is a nutritious treat that is rich in antioxidants. This recipe is easy and makes enough for 6 people in 5 minutes!

Ingredients

- 2 cups of dark chocolate chips (you can also use milk, semi-sweet or white chocolate chips)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Various toppings – nuts, dried fruit, raisins, crushed candy canes, pretzels, peanut butter cups, etc.

Instructions

- Line a 10 x 15-inch pan or cookie sheet with wax or parchment paper.
- Place chocolate chips in a microwave safe bowl. Add the oil. Heat on 50% power, stirring in between, until melted and smooth. No microwave? Place the chocolate in a large heat-proof bowl over a pot of gently boiling water, until the chocolate is melted (stirring frequently).
- Spread chocolate into an even layer on the prepared pan and immediately top with desired toppings.
- Chill quickly in the refrigerator (30 minutes) or for a couple of hours on the counter top to set then break into pieces.

Enjoy!

Inside... *Ways to Manage Chronic Pain*

Important Member News!



Your feedback is important!

Beginning in January 2023, you may be asked to complete a Member Satisfaction Survey by mail.

What is it? The Member Satisfaction Survey measures your experience and satisfaction with the services you receive from your health plan.

Who sends the survey? Island Peer Review Organization (IPRO), on behalf of the New York State Department of Health.

Why is it important? We want to hear from you because your feedback gives us information that helps us help you better. This is your chance to let us know how we are doing.

Is the survey anonymous? Yes. Not every member will receive the survey and we won't know who completed it. The survey is completely voluntary and your responses will not impact your benefits in any way.

We thank you in advance for completing the survey. If you have any questions about your health plan, call your Care Team at the number below.

Your Care Team

1-888-867-6555 (TTY: 711)

Monday – Friday, 9 am – 5 pm

VNSNY is now VNS Health!



Only our name is changing. Our services and the people who support you are the same.

What you need to know...

- On January 1, 2023, your VNSNY CHOICE MLTC will change to VNS Health MLTC. Materials you receive for the 2023 plan year will say – VNS Health MLTC.
- In December, we will mail you a new ID card to use starting on January 1, 2023.
- Your Care Team is the same, all working to support you.
- You can reach your Care Team at the same number.
- We now have new email and website addresses:
 - o Please use "@vnshealth.org" for emails.
 - o Our new health plan website URL is vnshealthplans.org.

We appreciate your patience during the transition to VNS Health.

Checklist for a Great Start to 2023



Stay-Healthy Habit	What does it mean?
✓ Well Visit	See your Primary Care Provider every year for a check-up to monitor your blood pressure, weight, medications, etc. If you haven't already, make your appointment now!
✓ Eye Exam	Get an annual eye exam, especially if you have diabetes, which increases your risk for vision loss or blindness.
✓ Dental Exam	Schedule an exam and cleaning every year .
Vaccine	Timing
✓ Flu Shot	Annual flu shots protect you and the ones you love.
✓ Pneumonia Vaccine (PVC13 and PPSV23) Only a single dose of each vaccine is needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People age 65 and older who have never gotten a pneumonia vaccine should get a dose of PCV13 first, then within a year, get PPSV23.
✓ COVID-19 Vaccines and Booster Shots	COVID-19 vaccines and boosters will help keep you protected from severe COVID-19 illness. Check covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/ for updates.
✓ mpox (monkeypox)	People at high risk should get first and second doses. Go here to make an appointment: vaccinefinder.nyc.gov/ .
✓ Polio	<i>Unvaccinated</i> people should get vaccinated. Go here for more information: nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/poliomyelitis.page .
Stay Up To Date	What To Do
✓ Is your contact information up to date?	If you have a change in your name, telephone number, address, or email address, please update your information by calling us.
✓ Medicaid Recertification	When your Medicaid is due to expire, we'll send you a letter (with a prepaid return envelope) about what to do to continue your Medicaid coverage and remain a member of this plan.