

Spring 2020

You Have the Power to Improve Your Own Heart Health

At HomeFirst, we believe in empowering our members by providing tools and information to keep you healthier. Since February is American Heart month, it's the perfect time to share tips about improving your heart health.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in men and women in the U.S. The good news is that most risk factors can be controlled by you. You can keep your heart stronger and help prevent heart disease by adopting healthier lifestyle habits.

Heart Disease Risk Factors

Top risk factors include:

- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ High LDL ("bad") cholesterol
- ✓ Smoking

Almost half of U.S. adults have at least one of these three risk factors.

Other risk factors include:

- ✓ Being overweight or obese
- ✓ Poor diet
- ✓ Physical inactivity
- ✓ Excessive alcohol use
- ✓ Diabetes

What steps can you take for a healthier heart?

- **Know your numbers.** Get your blood pressure, total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, triglycerides, weight and body mass index (BMI) checked regularly.
- **Quit smoking.** This is a great way to lower your heart disease risk and improve overall health.
- **Reduce salt intake.** Excess sodium raises blood pressure. The American Heart Association (AHA) suggests a sodium intake of 2,300 mg or less a day.
- **Limit alcohol.** Have no more than one alcoholic drink a day if you're a woman or two drinks if you're a man.
- **Eat a diet rich in omega-3s and leafy greens.** Omega-3 fatty acids, found in cold water fish like salmon, mackerel and herring, reduce inflammation that can damage blood vessels. Leafy greens contain lots of fiber, which helps lower cholesterol.
- **Talk to your doctor about statins.** Last fall, we told you that statin medications are effective in lowering LDL, a major risk factor for heart disease. The fewer risk factors you have, the better your odds of avoiding a heart attack or stroke.

Sources:

American Heart Association, www.heart.org,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
www.cdc.gov/heartdisease



In This Issue...

At Elderplan/HomeFirst, our primary objective is to ensure our members receive quality care and support. That's why this issue of *All Together Healthy* covers valuable information that will help you maintain your health and wellness. From tips that will help you achieve a healthier heart to how to identify six common medical conditions so you'll know when it's time to seek treatment, as well as a delicious, healthy recipe that's perfect for cold winter nights, this newsletter has it all.

And since we know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, we're making it easier than ever for you to get recommended health screenings. Some screenings can be done in the comfort of your own home. Also, to help you stay on top of receiving important health screenings, we launched a new program in 2019 that makes it possible for you to receive reminders by text. Many members are already taking advantage of this helpful new feature.

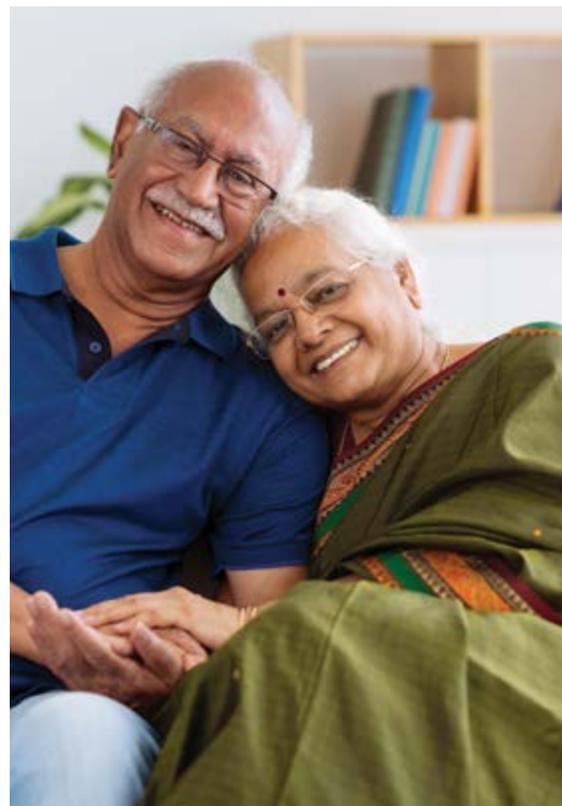
I'm very proud to report that in 2019, our Elderplan Medicare Advantage plans received their highest star rating in the plan's history. In addition, both Elderplan MAP and HomeFirst achieved the highest tier rating available for the second year in a row and HomeFirst – our managed long-term care plan – earned 5 out of 5 stars, as published in the New York State Consumer Guide on overall health plan performance for the second consecutive year.

While we are pleased that our members have given us strong ratings, Elderplan/HomeFirst remains committed to continuous improvement. That's why it's so important that we receive your feedback.

We know you have a choice about which health plan you select...so I'd like to personally thank you for choosing Elderplan/HomeFirst. It is our honor and privilege to provide your care.

Sincerely,

DAVID WAGNER
President, Health Plans



Managing Health Issues to Keep You Out of the Hospital

At HomeFirst, we know that being in the hospital is the last place you want to be. And if you've recently been in the hospital, we also know you don't want to be back again anytime soon.

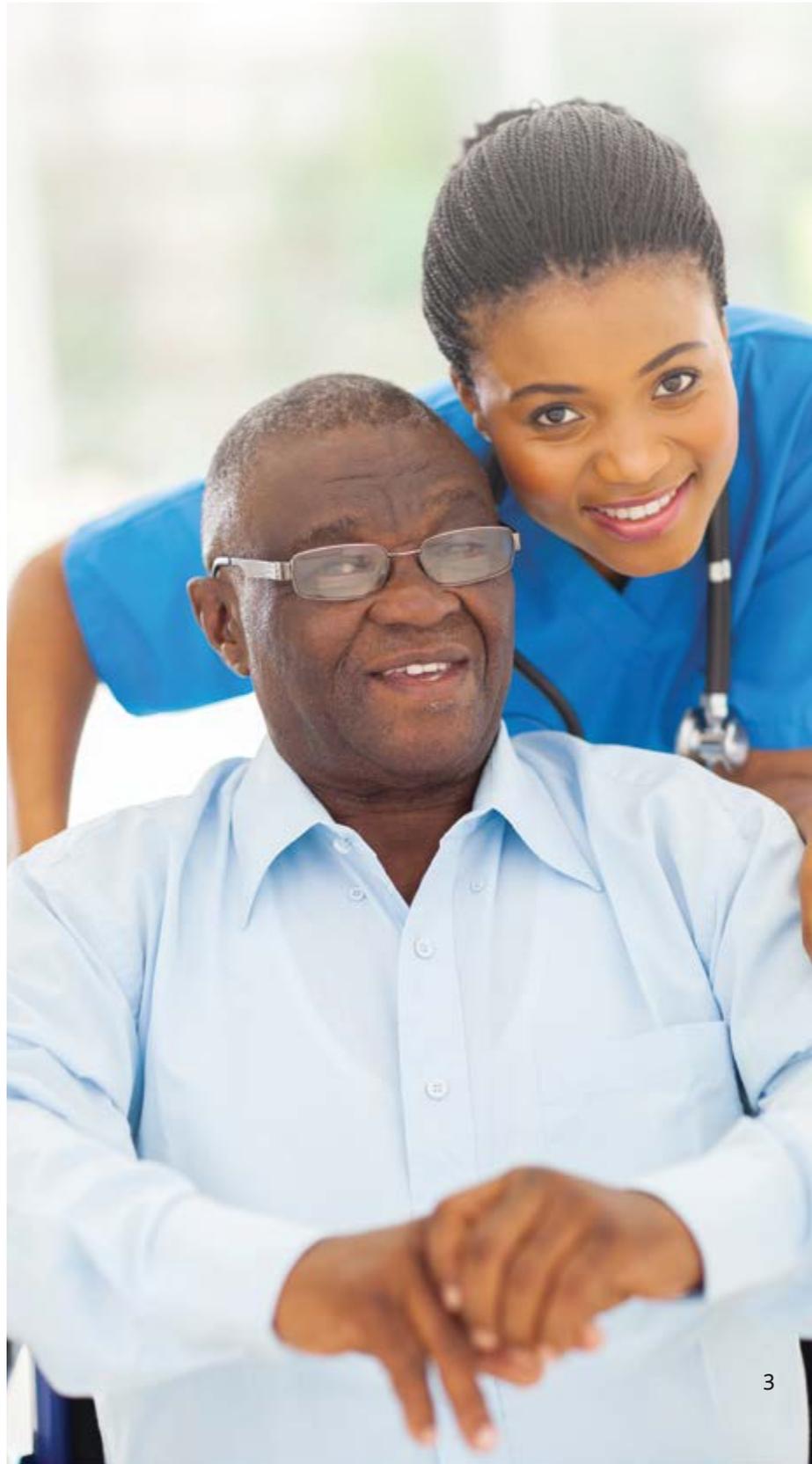
Our goal is the same as yours. To help you stay out of the hospital. That's why we want to make you aware of health conditions to look out for before they become serious.

On the next page, we have listed six common health conditions along with symptoms to look out for. We've also provided information on prevention and treatment of these conditions to help you stay healthier.

Being able to recognize these symptoms will help you better manage your health with your health care team, including your physician, care manager and home health aide.

Talk with your family members, home health aide or care manager about early warning signs. Keep your appointments with your primary care physician (PCP). You can also visit a local participating urgent care center before your condition becomes severe and requires a hospital stay. And now in 2020, you can even schedule free transportation to get to your nearest participating urgent care center by calling Logisticare at 877-779-8611.

[Turn the page for information on how to recognize common health conditions...](#)



How to Recognize Common Health Conditions

CONDITION	SYMPTOMS	PREVENTION/TREATMENT
<p>ANEMIA Anemia develops when you don't have enough red blood cells or hemoglobin in your blood, which reduces oxygen flow to the body's organs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue, decreased energy or weakness • Shortness of breath • Lightheadedness • Heart palpitations • Pale skin, cold hands or feet 	<p>Symptoms of anemia require an evaluation by a doctor and testing to determine the cause since anemia is often due to another underlying health condition. Treatment varies depending on the cause and severity of the condition. Anemia can often be prevented by seeing a doctor regularly and getting routine blood tests. In some cases, anemia can be prevented or treated by simply eating a healthy diet or taking supplements.</p>
<p>SEPSIS Sepsis is a potentially life-threatening condition caused by the body's response to an infection. Almost any infection can lead to sepsis. The condition occurs most often in people who are hospitalized or have been recently hospitalized.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath, rapid heartrate • Confusion or disorientation • Extreme pain or discomfort • Fever, shivering or feeling very cold • Pale, discolored or clammy skin 	<p>If sepsis isn't diagnosed and treated early, it can lead to septic shock and death. Treatment involves antibiotics to treat the infection and intravenous (IV) fluids. The best way to prevent sepsis is to avoid getting an infection that can lead to sepsis. Get recommended vaccines, wash hands often, keep wounds clean and try to stay out of the hospital to reduce your risk. Get medical care immediately if you suspect sepsis or have an infection that's not getting better or is getting worse.</p>
<p>CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) causes the flow of air from the lungs to be blocked, leading to breathing-related problems. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis are the most common causes of COPD.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent coughing • Wheezing • Shortness of breath • Difficulty taking deep breaths • Excess phlegm, mucus or sputum production 	<p>Treating COPD can reduce the frequency and severity of symptoms. Some treatment options include quitting smoking, avoiding air pollutants, taking medication and being vaccinated for illnesses like flu and pneumonia to help prevent lung infections. You may also need to use supplemental oxygen. The best way to prevent COPD is to not smoke or to quit smoking if you do.</p>

CONDITION	SYMPTOMS	PREVENTION/TREATMENT
<p>DEHYDRATION Dehydration occurs when your body doesn't have as much fluid as it needs to carry out normal bodily functions. It is more common and especially dangerous in older adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme thirst • Less frequent urination • Dark-colored urine • Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, confusion • Rapid heartrate 	<p>Mild dehydration can usually be treated by drinking water, tea, juice, bouillon or sports drinks containing electrolytes. Moderate to severe dehydration may require intravenous (IV) fluids. To avoid dehydration, try to drink at least 7-8 cups of fluid a day. As outdoor temperatures rise, it's important to stay well hydrated.</p>
<p>URINARY TRACT INFECTION A urinary tract infection (UTI) results from bacteria entering any part of the urinary tract, including the bladder, urethra or kidneys.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pelvic pain or pain with urination • Increased urge to urinate • Blood in the urine • Back pain, nausea, vomiting or fever (may indicate kidney infection) 	<p>Simple UTIs usually resolve with a course of antibiotics. To prevent complications, start treatment as early as possible. To avoid getting a UTI, drink lots of water, urinate often, wipe from front to back (especially after bowel movements) and wear loose-fitting underwear.</p>
<p>CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE Congestive heart failure (CHF) occurs when your heart weakens and cannot pump enough blood and oxygen throughout your body. It is a chronic condition that cannot be cured but can be managed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath • Rapid heartrate • Difficulty breathing when lying down • Feeling tired or weak • Swelling in the legs, feet or ankles 	<p>Treatment usually involves taking prescription medication, reducing sodium, limiting fluids and doing regular physical activity. Early diagnosis and treatment can improve the quality and length of your life and may stall progression of the disease.</p>

Get Screened in the Comfort of Your Home

At HomeFirst, we want you to be as healthy as you can be. That's why we encourage you to get regular dental and vision screenings that will help keep you healthy for years to come.

We understand it's not always easy to get to a doctor's appointment and that going to the doctor is time consuming. That's why we've now made it easier to get screenings right in the comfort of your own home.

WHO OFFERS THESE HOME SCREENINGS?

Dental Exams

Healthplex, HomeFirst's dental services provider, provides at-home dental exams

Vision Exams

Superior Vision, HomeFirst's vision provider, can check your eyes at home.



If you have questions about how to get dental or vision exams at home, contact Member Services at 1-877-771-1119 (TTY: 711) Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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Chicken Stew

It doesn't get any easier than this chicken stew recipe. This heart healthy recipe can be made in one pot on the stove or in a slow cooker.

Ingredients

- 1/2 medium onion, diced
- 6 garlic cloves, sliced
- 2 cups chopped carrots
- 1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed of fat and cut into 1 1/2-inch chunks
- 4 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1/2 lb red bliss potatoes, scrubbed and quartered
- 1/3 cup wild rice
- 2 cups green beans, trimmed
- Black pepper to taste

Preparation

In a saucepan, combine onion, garlic, carrots, chicken, chicken broth and thyme and cook over low heat for 1 hour.

Add the potatoes, wild rice and green beans and cook for an additional 1 1/2 hours. Add pepper to taste.

Alternately, add all ingredients to a slow cooker and cook for 8 hours on low setting or 4 hours on high setting.

Nutrition Facts

Servings: 6

Serving size: 1 cup

Per serving: Calories: 209; Fat: 1g; Saturated Fat: 0; Cholesterol: 44mg; Sodium: 453mg; Carbohydrates: 26g; Fiber: 4g; Protein: 26g

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What's Inside

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You told us how to reach you and we listened!

Thanks to our new partner – Healthcrowd – we can now text you with friendly reminders and surveys that help you take control of your health.

You can look forward to hearing from us on the importance of:

Vision exams



Dental exams



Hearing exams



Caring every minute, every day.