

# Member news



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## What to Know About HIV and COVID-19

*Note: This information is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website on April 9, 2020.*

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation and CDC will provide updated information as it becomes available. Visit [www.cdc.gov/hiv](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv) for updates.

### Q. Are people with HIV at higher risk for COVID-19 than other people?

At the present time, we have no specific information about the risk of COVID-19 in people with HIV.

Older adults and people of any age who have a serious underlying medical condition might be at higher risk for severe illness, including people who are immunocompromised. The risk for people with HIV getting very sick is greatest in:

- People with a low CD4 cell count, and
- People not on HIV treatment (antiretroviral therapy or ART)

People with HIV can also be at increased risk of getting very sick with COVID-19 based on their age and other medical conditions.

### Q. What can people with HIV do to protect themselves from COVID-19?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent getting sick is to avoid exposure to the virus.

People with HIV should take everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

People with HIV should also continue to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This includes:

- Eating right,
- Getting at least 8 hours of sleep, and
- Reducing stress as much as possible.

Staying healthy helps your immune system fight off infection should it occur.

If you have HIV and are taking your HIV medicine, it is important to continue your treatment and follow the advice of your health care provider. This is the best way to keep your immune system healthy.

## **Q. What should I do if I think I might have COVID-19?**

Call your health care provider if you develop symptoms that could be consistent with COVID-19. Discuss how to get evaluated and how to avoid potentially exposing others to COVID-19.

## **What else can people with HIV who are at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 do to protect themselves?**

Nearly half of people in the United States with diagnosed HIV are aged 50 years and older. People with HIV also have higher rates of certain underlying health conditions. Both increased age and these conditions can increase their risk for more severe illness if people with HIV get COVID-19, especially people with advanced HIV.

Steps that people with HIV can take to prepare in addition to what is recommended for everybody:

- Make sure you have at least a 30-day supply of your HIV medicine and any other medications or medical supplies you need for managing HIV.
- Talk to your health care provider and make sure all your vaccinations are up-to-date, including vaccinations against seasonal influenza and bacterial pneumonia. These vaccines prevent diseases that disproportionately affect people with HIV.
- Establish a plan for clinical care if you have to stay at home for a couple of weeks. Try to establish a telemedicine link through your HIV care provider's online portal. If telemedicine is not available to you, make sure you can communicate with your provider by phone or text.
- Make sure you can maintain a social network remotely, such as online, by phone, or by video chat. This can help you stay socially connected and mentally healthy, which is especially important for people with HIV.
- People with HIV can sometimes be more likely than others to need extra help, from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, and others. If you become sick, make sure you stay in touch by phone or email with people who can help you.

## **Can HIV medicine (ART) be used to treat COVID-19?**

Some types of HIV medicine (for example, lopinavir-ritonavir) to treat COVID-19 are being evaluated. Results from a clinical trial in China showed that lopinavir-ritonavir did not speed up recovery or reduce the amount of virus produced in patients hospitalized with COVID-19 and pneumonia. More than 15 clinical trials of HIV medicines are registered on ClinicalTrials.gov. Until more is known about the effects of these medicines on COVID-19, people with HIV should not switch their HIV medicine in an attempt to prevent or treat COVID-19.

## Are shortages of HIV medicine (ART) or pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) expected?

Drug shortages or anticipated problems with HIV medicine have not been identified.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is closely monitoring the drug supply chain as the COVID-19 outbreak has the potential to disrupt the supply of medical and pharmaceutical products in the United States.

The National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD) has also remained in contact with the major manufacturers of HIV medicine as many of these products rely on ingredients produced in China.

As of March 10, 2020, there were no reports of manufacturing concerns or supply shortages.



### “I have diabetes—now how do I manage it?”

Having diabetes makes you more aware of how it affects your eyes, heart, kidneys and limbs. To lower your chances of getting complications like blindness, heart problems or limb loss, you **must** pay attention to your body.

### First Things First

- **Test! Don't Guess!** Never guess at what you think your blood sugar reading is. Use your testing meter to check as often as your doctor recommends.
- **Write it down.** Record your blood sugar readings, noting the day and time in a log book. If you have a smart phone, use the Notes or Health app.
- **See your doctor!** Share your blood sugar record with your primary care physician and endocrinologist. It helps them make adjustments to your care.

### ■ What else is important?

- Get an HbA1c test twice a year.
- Eat a diabetes-friendly diet to keep your blood-sugar and weight in check.
- **Move!** Try to exercise every day. March in place during TV commercials, search YouTube for a program you like or take a walk in your neighborhood. Be sure to discuss any change in your exercise routine with your doctor first.

You can live well with diabetes if you pay attention to your body and follow your Care Plan.

VNSNY CHOICE complies with Federal civil rights laws. VNSNY CHOICE does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

ATENCION: si habla español, tiene a su disposicion servicios gratuitos de asistencia linguistica. Llame al 1-866-469-7774 (TTY: 711).

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-866-469-7774 (TTY: 711)。



## Budget and Diabetes-Friendly Vegetable Frittata

Staying healthy with diabetes means paying attention to what you eat, especially carbohydrates, which affect your blood sugar the most. This is an easy, low-carbohydrate recipe.

### Ingredients

- 1 tbsp oil (olive, canola or vegetable)
- 8 oz mushrooms (diced)
- 1 medium red bell pepper (seeded and diced)
- 1 small onion (diced)
- 3 cups fresh spinach (or 8 oz frozen)
- 4 eggs
- ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup milk (skim, whole, 1 or 2 percent)
- ½ tsp salt (optional)
- ½ tsp black pepper

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Heat oil in an oven safe, non-stick frying pan over medium high heat.
3. Add mushrooms, bell pepper, onion and spinach and sauté until vegetables are softened and liquid is absorbed.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk eggs, milk, salt and pepper.
5. Pour egg mixture over vegetables-cook until the eggs start to set.
6. Sprinkle the cheddar cheese over the eggs.
7. Bake for 20 minutes or until eggs are set.

***Slice and enjoy!***

*We want to hear from you!*

Join us for our next Member Advisory Committee meeting. It's your chance to hear about plan updates and share your experiences as a SelectHealth member. For more information, please call Member Services at 1-866-469-7774 (TTY: 711).

### If Something Seems Wrong, Tell Us.

SelectHealth 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](https://vnsny.ethicspoint.com).  
Learn more at: [vnsnychoice.org/for-our-members/member-rights/compliance-program](https://vnsnychoice.org/for-our-members/member-rights/compliance-program).

### Member Services

1-866-469-7774 (TTY: 711)  
8 am – 6 pm, Monday – Friday  
[SelectHealthNY.org/member](https://SelectHealthNY.org/member)



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# Additional Resources on COVID-19

## Telehealth Services During the COVID-19 State of Emergency

### Staying Connected with Telehealth

Telehealth allows you to use your phone, computer or tablet to have a real-time audio and visual visit with your provider from the comfort and safety of your home.

### Your Telehealth Benefit Is Expanded

Effective March 1, 2020, your telehealth benefit allows you to have a doctor's visit on your telephone, **without** the video component. This benefit applies to both medical and behavioral health visits. This expanded benefit is effective as of this mailing. SelectHealth will notify you if the expansion (to the phone-only option) changes.

Please call your healthcare provider to ask about scheduling a telehealth visit for these services:

- Assessment
- Diagnosis
- Consultation
- Treatment
- Education
- Care management and/or self-management



### Behavioral Health

SelectHealth's partner for behavioral health, **Beacon Health Options**, covers telehealth services including, phone therapy, for most services at *no cost* to you. Please call 1-855-735-6098 to book an appointment.

### SafeLink Wireless

- You automatically qualify since you participate in Medicaid.
- Call 1-800-SafeLink (723-3546) for enrollment and plan-change support.
- Subscribers can use their own phones to access additional minutes, unlimited texts and more.

**Source:** [www.medicaid.gov/](http://www.medicaid.gov/)

## COVID-19 Resources

VNSNY CHOICE has been proactive in helping our members in the fight against COVID-19. As your trusted health plan, we reacted quickly and sent you information about what the coronavirus is, how to protect yourself from getting it and how to recognize symptoms. If you are living with HIV, there are special resources. Please refer to these resources for reliable information on COVID-19.

1. **New York State hotline:** **1-888-364-3065**
2. **New York State Department of Health website:** [www.health.ny.gov/coronavirus](http://www.health.ny.gov/coronavirus)
3. **Centers for Disease Prevention and Control website:** [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)
4. **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** also offers an informative site called: Interim Guidance for COVID-19 and Persons with HIV at [aidsinfo.nih.gov/guidelines](http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/guidelines)

## Important Information on Wearing Masks

### Q. What do I need to know about masks?

**A.** Health officials in the U.S. recommend people wear a face covering made of cloth when they are in public where social distancing may be not be possible. This is mainly to prevent people who don't have symptoms (or don't have them yet) from spreading the virus. You can make your own mask from household items. The CDC has instructions on their website at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). Medical masks like N95s must be saved for healthcare workers.

### Q. What is a "face covering" and how do I use it?

**A.** A face covering can be anything that covers your nose and mouth, like a scarf or a bandana. If you use a cloth face covering, wash it after using it for one day and do not wear it again until it is dry. If you use a paper mask, throw it away at the end of the day. Even when you use a face covering, it is important to avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are in public, try to stay at least 6 feet away from other people.



## No Member Should Ever Be Hungry

During the COVID-19 public health crisis, New York City has taken steps to make sure every New Yorker has access to the food they need. For the most current resources for New York City please go to [www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/contact/services/COVID-19FoodAssistance](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/contact/services/COVID-19FoodAssistance).

### Member Services – Always There for You

SelectHealth members can also call Member Services for a list of resources that are available to help provide food in times of need (in addition to those created specially during this crisis). Call us at the number below. We're here to help.

## Steps to a Healthier Life – Rewards When You Need Them Most

The Steps to a Healthier Life program (Steps) rewards you for taking care of your health. Depending on your health needs, you could earn \$500 or more in gift cards each year. For complete details, go to [SelectHealthNY.org/steps](http://SelectHealthNY.org/steps).



In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that extra funds can only help. We want to make sure that if you see an envelope like the one pictured here, you open it. There's important information inside about possible rewards you've earned with Steps. So why not check your mailbox or go through that pile of unopened mail? We are here to help you get through this challenging time. Don't hesitate to call Member Services with questions or concerns.

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1-866-469-7774 (TTY: 711)

8 am – 6 pm, Monday – Friday

[SelectHealthNY.org/member](http://SelectHealthNY.org/member)





**SelectHealth is the same great Medicaid health plan. We just have a new look. Soon, everything from SelectHealth will have this new look.**

We know you are more than your health status, more than your age, pronoun, sexual identity, housing status, or any one single thing. We created a new look that celebrates you living your healthiest and brightest life!

While we make the change, you may see things from us in our old look as well. It's all coming from SelectHealth, the same plan you know.

If you have questions about SelectHealth materials you get or see in your community, please call Member Services toll-free:

**1-866-469-7774 (TTY: 711)**

**8 am – 6 pm, Monday – Friday**

**[SelectHealthNY.org/member](https://SelectHealthNY.org/member)**

*Same great plan.  
Exciting new look.*