

HEALTH*Styles*

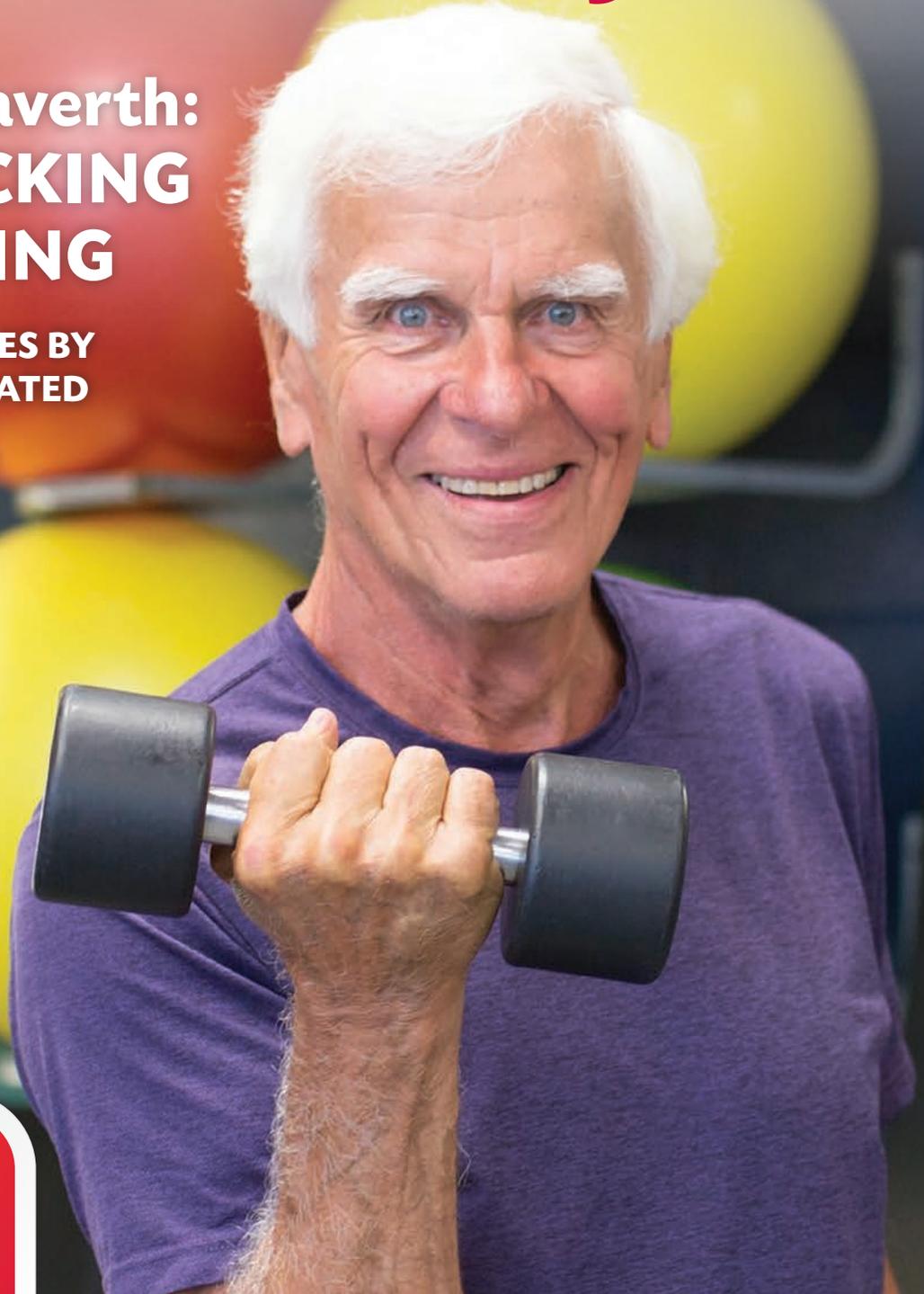
FALL 2019/WINTER 2020

WWW.INDEPENDENTHEALTH.COM

Danny Neaverth: KEEP ROCKING and MOVING

PREVENT SHINGLES BY
GETTING VACCINATED

We're proud to be
teaming up with
the Buffalo Bills



**What's new
for 2020?**

See page 4.

Independent
 Health[®]

Independent Health is a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract offering HMO, HMO-SNP, HMO-POS and PPO plans. Enrollment in Independent Health depends on contract renewal.

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INSIDE this issue

As the colder weather sets in, we are here to help guide you through the changes this time of year brings.

This issue includes several pages about 2020 plan options and benefit updates, as well as exciting news about our Medicare Information Centers.

Don't miss out on tips to keep you healthy when you head to warmer climates (see page 9). Find out how taking your meds properly can save you money (see page 11).

Did you know Independent Health has renewed its partnership with the Buffalo Bills? Turn to page 6 to find out how we're teaming up to improve our community's health and well-being.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

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- 6 Meet our new Chief Medical Officer
- 10 Understanding and preventing shingles
- 12 Staying healthy after a hospital stay



BROOK IS HERE TO BE YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH COMPANION

At Independent Health, we're committed to providing leading-edge technology that makes it easier for people living with chronic health conditions to make healthy choices. Whether you're experiencing diabetes or hypertension, or you just want to be healthier, Brook is Independent Health's personal health service that helps you manage your health on your terms. New in 2020, we will be offering Brook as a free app for your smartphone.

Providing you with 24/7 support

Brook is here to answer all your questions. You can simply chat with Brook anytime from your mobile phone. Brook will gather as much information as it can so that its team of health experts, which includes nutritionists and registered dietitians, can provide you with personalized recommendations and tips, while also helping you develop strategies for accountability toward achieving your personal health goals. For example, if you have diabetes or hypertension, you can use Brook to get the support you need between doctor visits to improve your numbers.

Make better decisions

With Brook, you can track everything to do with your health, including food choices, exercise, health goals and your medication. Brook's comprehensive dashboard makes it easy to see what you need to do to get healthier. Motivation and milestones are also built in with Brook. Work toward your goals and discover what works best to keep you on track, all from your mobile phone.

You can download Brook by visiting www.brook.health. To gain free access to the app, you'll be asked to verify your name and Independent Health membership by entering your member ID from your Independent Health insurance card.

BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT

There's no slowing down Danny Neaverth

At 81, he's still going strong – on the radio and at the gym!

For the past 50 years, Danny Neaverth has done his part to make sure Western New Yorkers are moving their fannies in the morning. While most of his former colleagues are now retired, the broadcasting legend is still playing the classic oldies and entertaining radio listeners with his quick wit and sense of humor every Monday from 6 to 9 a.m. on WECK Radio (1230 AM).

When he's not in the studio or spending time with his four sons and their families, Neaverth can often be found moving his own fanny at the Southtowns Family YMCA in West Seneca. As an Independent Health Medicare Advantage plan member, he uses his free gym membership through the Healthy Benefits Fitness Program to access the facility's many amenities, including cardiovascular equipment and weight machines.

According to the 81-year-old Neaverth, working out three days a week is a big reason why he's stayed so sharp and energetic into his golden years.

"Being at the gym keeps me active and happy," Neaverth said. "When you get to be my age, so many of us are on medications and are having problems with different parts of our bodies. But exercise can really help. Even on days when I don't feel like going to the gym, I still show up. I rarely miss it. By the time my workout is over, I feel mentally and physically great. My late wife, Marie, used to say to me 'You're getting a little crabby, you should go to the gym.' That's



because she knew I was always in a better mood after a good workout."

Keep rocking and moving

A native of South Buffalo and a longtime resident of Orchard Park, Neaverth is a member of the Buffalo Broadcast Pioneers Hall of Fame and the New York State Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame. He remains one of the most popular figures in Western New York, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly warm response he received when he attended a series of Independent Health Medicare Member Appreciation events earlier this year.

However, when it comes to his many accomplishments, Neaverth would prefer to talk about push-ups than his career.

"I could drop and do 85 push-ups right now," Neaverth proudly said. "Just a few years ago, I could

probably do 35 to 40. Then one day, I asked my grandson (one of his nine grandchildren) how many he could do, and he said about 100. I thought, 'Well, I better get to 100.' So that became my goal. I can easily do 85 and have even got up to 110. There's a lot of younger people who can't do that."

Whether it's push-ups or taking a walk around the block, Neaverth encourages other older adults to "keep rocking and moving."

"A lot of people when they retire, they retire from life. They stop being active and they get complacent. Unfortunately, that's not going to make you happy," Neaverth said. "Even if you don't belong to a gym, there's plenty of ways to keep your body moving at home and outside. Find something that interests you and just keep going."

Plan news: What you can expect in 2020

Independent Health thanks you for your continued membership and wants to make sure you completely understand your Medicare Advantage plan options for 2020.

Our knowledgeable and friendly RedShirtsSM are ready to help you through the Medicare annual enrollment period (running now until December 7). It's just one of the many reasons why more people choose us than any other Medicare Advantage plan in Western New York.*

Overview of our plans**

Helping you maintain a healthy lifestyle goes above and beyond your medical coverage. That's why we continue to offer our Premier Wellness Package, which provides you the wellness benefits that you use the most. It includes vision coverage, a hearing aid benefit, preventive dental, a gym membership, an enhanced wellness visit and a telemedicine benefit. Plus, new for 2020, we are offering Brook, a free personal health companion app for your smartphone (see page 2).

Since we're dedicated to serving you and your unique needs, our Medicare Advantage plans come with additional benefits and services to help you get the most out of your coverage. For example, we've added optional comprehensive dental coverage (see page 5). In addition, some of our plans will include free home-delivered meals (see page 12) and free non-emergency transportation to approved medical locations coordinated through SafeRide.



Year-round customer service and more at select Medicare Information Centers***

In an effort to continually provide the RedShirt[®] Treatment, we've added year-round customer service at three of our Medicare Information Center locations (in Cheektowaga/Depew, Orchard Park and Jamestown/Lakewood) to ensure you can always speak one-on-one and in-person with an experienced RedShirt.

Plus, we want to give you even more ways to help you get and stay healthy. That's why we're excited to introduce health and wellness education and activities at our new Health Hub at our Cheektowaga/Depew site for 2020. From social activities to fitness classes to speaking with a pharmacist, we give you more ways to live a healthier lifestyle.

Our RedShirts are here to help

We want you to feel confident that you're in the best plan for your individual needs. You should have

received your personal RedShirt[®] Benefit Review by mail, which includes additional information on your plan changes and all our 2020 plan options.

If you're happy with your current plan, you don't have to do anything as you will be automatically re-enrolled. However, if you have questions, please visit one of our Medicare Information Centers or call us at **(716) 250-4401** or **1-800-665-1502** toll-free (TTY: **711**): October 1–March 31: Monday–Sunday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; April 1–September 30: Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For more information about our plans and Medicare Information Centers, visit **www.independenthealth.com/medicare**.

*Per CMS WNY enrollment data 9/2019.

**Benefits vary by plan.

***For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings, please call **(716) 635-4900** or **1 (800) 958-4405 (TTY: 711)**.



Comprehensive dental coverage that will make you smile

As you age, good dental care needs to be part of your life. Without it, you're prone to cavities, pain, and an inability to eat healthy foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables. These problems can affect your overall health and longevity.

For instance, older people can still get cavities when old fillings break down or receding gums expose root surfaces. If left untreated, periodontal (gum) disease can affect the bones and tissues that support your teeth. You may need to have teeth pulled as a result. Plus, people with gum disease have nearly double the risk for heart disease as those with healthy gums, according to the American Academy of Periodontology.

The American Dental Association recommends everyone see a dentist for a checkup at least once a year. That's why most Independent Health Medicare Advantage plans* include the following preventive dental services at no cost to our members:

- Oral exams (two per calendar year)
- Routine cleanings (two per calendar year)

- Bitewing X-rays (two per calendar year)
- Full mouth X-rays (one every three years)

NEW FOR 2020! In addition to our preventive dental benefit, Independent Health will begin offering comprehensive dental coverage through HealthPlex. This benefit will be available for an additional \$30 monthly premium on some of our Medicare Advantage plans.* Our members will have the option of adding this comprehensive dental coverage, which includes periodontal cleanings, root canals, dentures and more. This benefit provides our members with \$2,000 worth of coverage, with 50% coinsurance for restorative services with no deductible.

**Benefits vary by plan.*

→ FOR MORE INFORMATION or to enroll in the optional comprehensive dental benefit, please speak with one of our RedShirtsSM during the annual enrollment period (see page 4).

Independent Health again earns a 4.5-Star Medicare Rating

Independent Health is proud to be recognized as a 4.5-Star-Rated Medicare Plan* for 2020 by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The annual star ratings are designed to help Medicare beneficiaries assess the quality, value and performance of every Medicare Advantage plan in the nation.

Using a 5-Star Quality Rating System, with 5 being the highest-rated plan, CMS measures Medicare beneficiaries' experience with their health plans and the health care system. Among the plans' measured components are customer service, member experience and patient safety.

This marks the 10th consecutive year Independent Health's HMO plan has received a 4.5-Star Rating.

"The CMS star ratings serve as a helpful and unbiased way for Medicare beneficiaries to objectively compare their medical and prescription drug options for 2020 and choose the plan that is right for them," said Cathy Aquino, director of government sales, Independent Health. "Our 4.5-Star Medicare Rating in 2020 is a testament to our long-standing efforts of providing the highest level of customer service and partnering with health care providers to make sure our members receive well-coordinated, high-quality care."

**Every year, Medicare evaluates plans based on a 5-star rating system.*

Partnership with the Buffalo Bills extended

Independent Health is proud to announce that it will continue to serve as the Official Health and Wellness Partner of the Buffalo Bills for the next five years. Since 2014, we have teamed up with the Bills to help improve the health and well-being of Western New Yorkers through several communitywide initiatives, including the Independent Health and Buffalo Bills Health & Wellness Challenge.

Held twice a year—once in the spring and again in the fall—the Health & Wellness Challenge was designed to help people get moving and eat healthier. More than 30,000 Western New Yorkers have registered for this fun and engaging six-week program, with nearly 9.3 million minutes of physical activity being logged and 3.6 million glasses of water and 2.2 million servings of fruits and vegetables being consumed since it first kicked off five years ago.

The 11th Health & Wellness Challenge is running now through December 1. All participants who meet daily fitness and nutritional goals and complete healthy activities and challenges will earn points and be eligible to win a variety of prizes, including a \$5,000 cash grand prize. Visit www.buffalobills.com/challenge to sign up for this fall's Health & Wellness Challenge.

Independent Health appoints new Chief Medical Officer



Former Erie County Health Commissioner Anthony J. Billittier IV, M.D., was named Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer of Independent Health in June. He succeeds Thomas J. Foels, M.D., who retired in April after serving 10 years in the post.

As Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Billittier is in charge of all medical management initiatives for the company. He also helps set clinical direction to help our members get and stay healthy through a variety of programs.

“Dr. Billittier is the perfect candidate to pick up right where Dr. Foels left off in advancing Independent Health’s efforts to transform health care in our community through close, collaborative partnerships with physicians and providers,” said Michael W. Cropp, M.D., President and CEO, Independent Health. “Dr. Billittier’s passion for the health of the community and his strong relationships with providers across the community will further advance our mission to improve the health and well-being of the entire Western New York region.”

Dr. Billittier brings more than three decades of experience in the medical field to Independent Health. He has been an emergency physician with UBMD for more than 28 years and, more recently, a partner in Mobile Healthcare Partners. He previously served as the Chief Medical Officer of Millennium Collaborative Care, Erie County Medical Center’s Performing Provider System initiative, and most recently was the founding Dean of the D’Youville College School of Health Professions. Prior to that he served as Health Commissioner in Erie County for 11 years.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MEMBER DISCOUNTS

As an Independent Health member, you can receive discounts on a wide range of goods and health and wellness services. Simply show your member ID card and start saving – some discounts offer a savings of 30% or more! To view all the discounts available to you, visit www.independenthealth.com/discounts.

HEALTH MATTERS

Our Case Managers offer support and guidance

Independent Health is proud to have a dedicated Case Management team made up of experienced and highly trained nurses and other health care specialists. If you have been diagnosed with multiple health conditions and/or have been in the hospital due to a serious health issue, our Case Managers are here to help coordinate your care, educate you about your conditions and make sure you have all the support you need. Case Management services are provided by phone as part of your coverage. There is no additional cost. If you or a family member could benefit from Independent Health's Case Management program, please call **(716) 635-7822** for medical conditions or **(716) 635-5333** for behavioral health conditions, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Help us serve you better by joining our Medicare Member Advisory Panel



Four times a year, Independent Health staff members meet with a group of our Medicare Advantage plan members to discuss our plans, benefits and programs, as well as get their feedback and suggestions. This group, called the Medicare Member Advisory Panel, assists us with understanding the concerns and opinions of our Medicare Advantage plan members. The goal of the panel is to help us improve customer satisfaction and the quality of our Medicare Advantage plans. In order for us to continue to have an effective panel, we are searching for additional members to donate their time and ideas. If you would like to be considered for our Medicare Member Advisory Panel, please email **medicareservice@servicing.independenthealth.com**.

EXERCISE IS GOOD FOR YOUR BONES

Exercise is a great way to keep your bones healthy. But what kind is the best? If it's safe for you (check with your health care provider), high-impact weight-bearing exercises are the way to go. Aerobics, hiking, dancing, running or jogging, playing tennis and even jumping rope are all great choices. If you can't do high-impact activities, try low-impact weight-bearing exercises, like brisk walking and using an elliptical, or doing low-impact aerobics. Muscle-strengthening or resistance exercises, like lifting weights, doing body-weight exercises or working out with elastic exercise bands, also help keep bones healthy.

Reminder about drug formularies

Prescription drug coverage can play a big role in your decision process when choosing which Medicare Advantage plan will work best for you. You can learn what medications are covered by Independent Health by viewing our drug formularies online. Visit **www.independenthealth.com/medicare**, go to the "Prescription Coverage" section and then click on "Formularies & Pharmacies." You can also request a hard copy of your formulary by calling our Member Services Department.

DEPRESSION IS DIFFERENT IN MEN AND WOMEN

Not sure if you're just feeling down or truly suffering from depression? Knowing how depression manifests in men and women can help you figure it out. For men, symptoms often include fatigue, anger and irritability. Depression in men can also involve drug and/or alcohol abuse and reckless or impulsive behavior. In women, depression often appears as sadness, guilt and feelings of worthlessness. If you think you might be depressed, we encourage you to talk openly with your doctor.



Family Choice[®] plan designed for residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities



For nearly 15 years, Independent Health's Medicare Family Choice[®] HMO I-SNP plan* has been providing an extra level of care and support to our members residing in nursing homes and assisted living facilities throughout Western New York. By doing so, we have given their family members the peace of mind of knowing their loved ones' quality of life is being maintained at the highest level possible.

Upon enrollment, each member is assigned to a Family Choice Interdisciplinary Care Team (ICT) consisting of the member's primary care provider (PCP), a Family Choice nurse practitioner (NP) or physician assistant (PA), a nurse (assisted living only), and a social worker/care manager.

Family Choice's "Treat in Place" philosophy aims to provide as many clinical services as possible in the member's residence, whenever safe and appropriate. Doing so helps to reduce unnecessary trips to the hospital or emergency room.

Key features of Family Choice

- A Family Choice NP or PA is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond to member care needs
- Low or no out-of-pocket costs
- Enrollment any time of the year

- Single point of contact nurse or coordinator for benefit authorizations and care transitions when going from one health care setting to another
- Individualized care plan that addresses member's needs and preferences

Program goals

- Work with physicians and facility staff to promote healthy aging and assist to identify potential problems before they become serious
- Minimize unnecessary and disruptive emergency room visits and hospital stays whenever it's safe and appropriate
- Keep in close contact with the member's family, updating them about their loved one's condition and involving them in the care-planning process

High satisfaction marks

Over the years, the Family Choice plan has consistently received high marks from families. A recent survey** of people whose loved ones use the program's services showed:

- 98% are satisfied with Family Choice.
- 98% would recommend Family Choice to another family of a facility resident.

- 98% feel their nurse practitioners or physician assistants provide their loved ones with the quality of care they expected them to receive.

To learn more about this plan, visit www.independenthealth.com/medicare or call **(716) 635-4900** or **1-800-958-4405** toll-free (TTY: **711**): October 1–December 7: Monday–Sunday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; December 8–September 30: Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**This plan is available to all individuals eligible for Medicare who are entitled to Medicare Part A and enrolled in Part B, except those with ESRD unless already enrolled with Independent Health. Member must be a permanent resident of a participating nursing or assisted living facility, qualify for an institutional level of care as defined by the state of New York, and select and use a Primary Care Provider who participates with Independent Health. **Survey conducted by Family Choice in January 2019 with 823 families surveyed and 249 families (30%) responding.*



Helpful advice for 'snow birds'

Independent Health knows that many of our Medicare members will soon be retreating to warmer climates to escape the cold and snow of the Western New York winter. If you're planning to be out of town for an extended period of time, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Contact your local post office and arrange for your mail to be sent to your temporary location. This will help to ensure you continue to receive information from Independent Health. You can also register to have important plan documents sent to you electronically so that you can access them anytime from anywhere. Just follow these easy steps:
 - Log on at **www.independenthealth.com/login**.
 - Click "View Document preferences" on the Account Home screen under "Documents."
 - Choose the "electronic" preference then click "Save preferences."
- Prior to leaving, make sure you visit your primary care doctor for routine care, such as your annual physical exam, preventive screenings and immunizations.
- As an Independent Health Medicare Advantage plan member, you are eligible to receive worldwide coverage for emergency and urgent care, as well as ambulance services while traveling outside of the United States and its territories.*
- When health concerns arise, you may be able to use your telehealth benefit to make an appointment and speak with your doctor back in Western New York via telephone, Skype or other alternative technologies. If your doctor is not available or does not offer telehealth services, we encourage you to use your telemedicine benefit through Teladoc® (learn more at **www.independenthealth.com/telemedicine**) or call Independent Health's 24-Hour Medical Help Line at **1 (800) 501-3439** to speak with a nurse.

As always, if you have any questions about your coverage while you're away from home, please contact our Member Services Department.

**Benefits vary by plan. These services are subject to a combined annual plan limit of up to \$10,000.*

You can help prevent health care fraud

Independent Health works with government agencies and other health plans to fight health care fraud. This crime is committed when a dishonest provider or consumer intentionally submits false or misleading information in order to obtain benefits they may not be entitled to.

Examples of health care fraud include filing claims for services not received or using someone else's coverage. Here are tips to avoid being a victim of health care fraud:

- Don't provide your Social Security or Independent Health Member ID Number to anyone except your doctor or health plan.
- Read your Explanation of Benefits (EOB) statements from Independent Health. Make sure you actually received the treatments on the EOB, and question suspicious expenses.
- Beware of offers for free health care services, tests or treatments. These are often fraud schemes designed to bill you and Independent Health illegally for treatments you never received.

If you suspect possible fraud or abuse, call Independent Health's Fraud & Abuse Hotline at **1 (800) 665-1182** (TTY users: **711**). You don't have to give your name.

We're dedicated to our members and their health care

Independent Health is dedicated to finding solutions to improve the health of our members and the care they receive.

- We help members take control of their own health care by reminding them of the preventive services they need.
- We create programs to help them better manage major medical conditions.
- We contact our participating physicians and health care providers on a regular basis so that they may best help their patients.
- While Independent Health rewards physicians for providing high levels of quality care to patients, it does not use incentives to encourage barriers to care and service.
- Independent Health is prohibited from and does not make decisions regarding hiring, promoting or terminating its practitioners or other individuals based upon the likelihood or perceived likelihood that the individual will support or tend to support the denial of benefits.
- Independent Health encourages appropriate utilization and discourages underutilization.

If you have any questions or concerns about your plan and benefits or need help finding a doctor, simply call our Member Services Department so that we can assist you.



Reduce your risk of developing shingles by getting vaccinated

If you've had chickenpox before, then you're at risk of developing shingles. In fact, one out of three people in the United States will develop shingles at some point in his or her life.

The varicella zoster virus causes both chickenpox and shingles. After you recover from chickenpox, the virus stays in your body. Years later, it can become active again and cause shingles.

Shingles appears as a painful rash on one side of either your face or body. Once the rash shows up, it contains blisters. The blisters scab over within about seven to 10 days. It can take two to four weeks for the rash to go away. Other symptoms include fever, headache, chills and upset stomach.

Some people have a higher risk of getting shingles. Your risk rises as you age. If you have a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or medicine that suppresses your immune system, then your risk for shingles is higher.

Prevention is key!

To prevent both shingles and the lingering pain associated with the condition, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends healthy adults 50 years and older get two doses of the Shingrix[®] vaccine, separated by 2 to 6 months. If you've had shingles before or received a different shingles vaccine, you can still get Shingrix to help prevent future occurrences of the disease.

Please note: Beginning January 1, 2020, Shingrix will move from Tier 3 to Tier 2 in the Independent Health Part D Drug Formulary. As a result, our members will no longer be subject to any Part D deductible for this vaccine and will pay a lower copayment for both doses.

Talk with your doctor to make sure Shingrix is right for you. Also, ask about other vaccinations you may need, including the flu and pneumonia vaccines.

Taking your medications properly can help you save money while keeping you healthy

You know you need to take your prescribed medications for optimal health. But did you know taking your medicine correctly can actually help you save money?

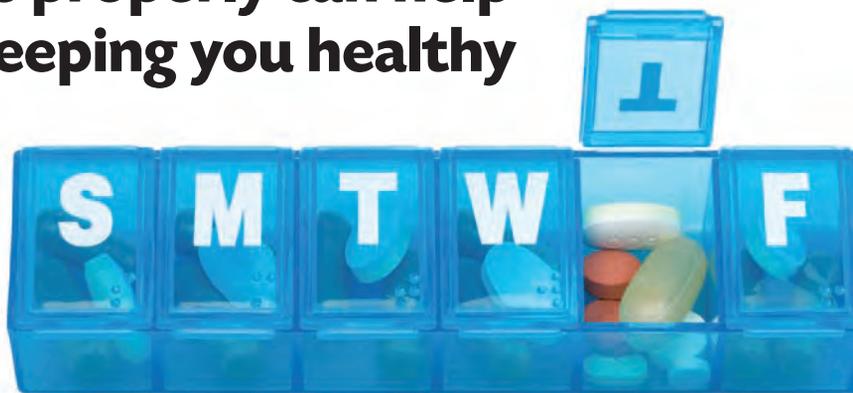
According to the American Heart Association, medication non-compliance costs the U.S. health care system nearly \$300 billion annually due to extra emergency department visits, hospital admissions and doctor's appointments. So, by taking your medications the right way, you can cut out unnecessary medical bills.

Keep your medication compliance on track with the following tips and tools:

- Use a pillbox. Fill it once a week so you can look back to see if you took your daily dose.
- Set an alarm.
- Store your medication in an obvious place, like near your coffeemaker.
- Mark a calendar when you take your medication.
- Check with your pharmacy to see if it offers special medication packaging, such as blister or pouch packs.

Receive copayment assistance

The New York State Department of Health offers the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program as a way to provide Medicare beneficiaries



with copayment assistance for their prescription drugs. To be eligible, you must be a New York State resident, 65 years of age or older, have an annual income below \$75,000 single or \$100,000 married, and be enrolled in a Medicare Part D drug plan and not receiving full Medicaid benefits. You may apply for EPIC at any time during the year.

→ WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EPIC? Visit www.health.ny.gov or call the EPIC Helpline at **1 (800) 332-3742**, Monday through Friday from **8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.** TTY users can call **1 (800) 290-9138**. In addition, a representative from EPIC will be hosting informational seminars, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., on November 13 and December 11 at the Independent Health Medicare Information Center's Cheektowaga/Depew location (620 Dick Road). **No reservation is necessary.**

English: ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-800-665-1502 (TTY: 711).

Independent Health complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Spanish: ATENCIÓN: Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-800-665-1502 (TTY: 711).

Independent Health cumple con las leyes federales de derechos civiles aplicables y no discrimina por motivos de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo.

Chinese: 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 1-800-665-1502 (TTY: 711)。

Independent Health 遵守適用的聯邦民權法律規定，不因種族、膚色、民族血統、年齡、殘障或性別而歧視任何人。



Health and wellness or prevention information

 For more ways to keep yourself healthy, follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

Important tips to follow after a hospital stay



You're probably excited to go home after a stay in the hospital. Sleeping in your own bed, eating a meal with your family—there really is no place like home. But don't rush out of the hospital too fast. It's important to understand your treatment plan before you leave. Otherwise, you may find yourself back in the hospital.

Must-know medication info

Many readmissions are due to medication misunderstandings. Your doctor or nurse should review your medications with you before you head home. For each medication, make sure you know:

- Common side effects
- How to take the medication (for example, with or without food)
- The name of the medication and the dose (for example, 200 milligrams)
- What the medication is for
- What to do if you miss a dose
- When to take it

Understand your treatment plan

Before you leave the hospital, your doctor will give you a paper called a discharge summary. It should have all

of the instructions you need to follow when you get home. It may include things like what type of exercise you should and shouldn't do, how to change your bandages, any special equipment you might need and, most important, when you should see your physician(s) for follow-up appointments. Read it over carefully when you receive it. Ask questions if you don't understand something.

It can help to have a friend or family member with you to remember what the doctor tells you. Make sure to ask the doctor who you should call if you have questions once you're home.

Following this advice can help prevent a readmission and keep you happily at home.

Many patients are unable to prepare their own meals after discharge from a hospital or skilled nursing facility. Therefore, as a way to help our members regain their strength and energy faster for better recoveries, Independent Health is introducing a "Home Delivered Meals" benefit for our Basic and Assure Advantage (C-SNP) plans in 2020. Under this new benefit, members will be able to get up to 14 healthy meals delivered to their homes for seven consecutive days following a hospital or skilled nursing facility overnight stay.