Volume 11

Fall 2009

The VidaCare View

The warm, lazy days of summer are behind us and fall has arrived. Fall is a beautiful season and a time when many people begin to think about "back to school." Even if you're no longer in school, we're all STUDENTS in the SCHOOL OF LIFE. Learning is a lifelong process. With the right help, there's much we can learn about ourselves including how to care for ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. This newsletter is full of information designed to help you LIVE YOUR LIFE, learn something new and be happy with yourself and with your life.

Doug Wirth, CEO

Maybe you wonder about what really makes you happy, feel fulfilled, able to stay clean/sober, and take risks to share yourself with others. As a VidaCare member you have access to hundreds of qualified counselors who will support you with these questions. See the valuable information on page 6 to decide if you want help and find out how to get it.

To focus on well-being and healthy living, we've provided information on important health screenings (pg 3) and immunizations (pg 7) that you can discuss with your Primary Care Provider. Do you know what to do if you feel unsafe in your own home? See page 5 to learn how VidaCare can assist you if you experience domestic violence.

Did you know that one of the most important things you can do to improve your health is to quit smoking? If you "need a plan to quit?" see page 8. Other information includes: Member Satisfaction, how to get eyeglasses, helping friends and family get tested, and a delicious, nutritious fall recipe.

Remember to check out the LIVE YOUR LIFE fall 'class schedule' on this page and page 2. By request, HIP HOP is at the TOP for our fall classes. Hope to see you there!

A Look Inside

Page 2: Live Your Life!

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See your PCP, get a gift

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Help your friends get tested

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Fabulous Fall Recipe

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Are Members satisfied?

Pages 8: Be a Quitter. You can do it!

Upcoming VidaCare Live Your Life Events For Members Only (+1 Guest)

September 30th 3-5PM
Hip Hop Dance ~ Find your Inner Hip Hop
Location: New Song Community Church
2230 Frederick Douglas Blvd.

October 21st 3-5PM
Aromatherapy ~ Achieve well being through the use of essential oils
Location: Lifeworks Center 150 W.28th St. Ste 1104

November 18th 3-5 PM
Nutrition ~ Learn how to make a delicious, nutritious meal on a budget
Location: Housing Works 320 W.13th St

December 17th 3-5 PM
Meditation ~ Gain Inner Peace with these relaxing and healing techniques
Location: Lifeworks Center 150 W.28th St. Ste 1104

Call 1-800-556-0689 to reserve your seat, meal and gift bag. Please reconfirm the event location.
Members only (plus one guest)!

Live Your Life Events

At VidaCare, we know that life is about more than just medical appointments and taking medications on time.

That is why we started the *Live Your Life* Program only for VidaCare members. These are a series of programs, run by guest experts on a variety of topics such as Nutrition, Meditation and Acupuncture.

***Live your Life* programs are offered once a month. Most events are limited to the first 50 members who sign up. VidaCare members may also bring one guest as long as they have signed up with the member. A light and healthy meal will be served and MetroCards will be provided.**

The upcoming *Live Your Life* event schedule can be found on the front page of this newsletter. Call VidaCare Member Services at 800-556-0689 to reserve your seat, meal and gift bag. Raffle prizes awarded at each event.

These programs are amazing FREE opportunities for VidaCare members to:

- **learn new ways to achieve maximum wellness,**
- **explore stress reduction strategies, and**
- **try new creative activities.**

Please join us for our next event!

Live Your Life Photos

Photos of Life Your Life participants are used with their permission.

***Colonoscopy, mammograms, and Pap smears save lives*.**
Cancer kills nearly 15,000 New Yorkers every year. Many of these deaths could be prevented if people at risk were properly screened. Screening has been shown to prevent death from 3 major cancers - **colon, breast, and cervical**. (www.nyc.gov)

COLON CANCER:

Colonoscopy is STRONGLY recommended for all people 50 years of age and older.

Several types of colon cancer tests exist, but colonoscopy examines the entire colon, is safe and painless, and is the only test that can actually remove polyps before they develop into cancer. *Any* colon screening test is better than no test.

Recommended time frames vary:

Colonoscopy every 10 years,
Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) every year, and
Flexible Sigmoidoscopy every 5 years

People with a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps —especially if family members were younger than 50 years when diagnosed—are at higher risk and should be screened before 50 years of age.

BREAST CANCER:

Mammograms are recommended every 1–2 years for all women 40 years of age and older.

Women with a family history of breast cancer should seek expert medical advice about whether to begin screening *before* 40 years of age and how often to get screened.

CERVICAL CANCER:

Routine Pap smears are STRONGLY recommended for all women who are:

Sexually active, and
Have not had a hysterectomy.

Women who have HIV infection should be screened annually. (Remember VidaCare's Rose Program that rewards our members for completing their annual women's health checkup with a gift card. For details call member services at 800-556-0689.)

Other cancers:

There are no current recommendations on prostate cancer screening; however you should talk to your Primary Care Provider. For gay, bisexual, and HIV-positive men, some doctors use anal Pap tests to detect and treat pre-cancerous changes of the anus. (ACS, 2008)

Reminder: Be sure to get to your Quarterly Primary Care Provider (PCP) Visits

VidaCare members can earn $10 gift cards for their quarterly HIV monitoring visits with their PCP. *

Seeing your PCP on a regular basis is very important to managing your HIV and ensuring that you maintain your health. At VidaCare, we want you to see your provider. We developed this incentive program to help make sure that you are getting the care you need!

At the visit ask the provider to complete the ***Promoting Member Health Program Report Card.***
Be sure to include your contact information so we can send you your gift card!
For more information about this program, contact member services at 800-556-0689.

Members are eligible to receive up to $50 in health related gift cards each year.

NEED EYEGLASSES?

VidaCare members have access to routine eye exams, eyeglasses and medically necessary contact lenses at all of the Davis Vision Providers in our network. That's more than 50 Vision providers in convenient locations through the boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx.

You may go to a Davis Vision provider for a routine eye examination and, as necessary, receive glasses / lenses once every 24 months. BUT, if your vision prescription has changed, you are eligible to receive new glasses /lenses at any time. For repair or replacement members should return to the original dispensing office to facilitate replacement under the warranty.

NOTE: Members with Diabetes may see any participating provider of vision services for annual dilated eye exam. (optometrist or ophthalmologist)

If you have any questions about how to get glasses or contact lenses or need to find a provider near you:

- **Call VidaCare Member Services at 800-556-0689,**
- **See pgs. 207-208 of the current VidaCare Provider Directory, or**
- **Call Davis Vision at 1-800-999-5431 and let them know that you're a VidaCare member.**

Encourage your Friends and Family to get Tested!

Most VidaCare members know their HIV status. But LOTs of people don't! Maybe you have friends, partners or family members that have never been tested. HIV testing should be part of everyone's healthcare, but people who have engaged in behaviors that may have put them at risk for HIV infection, should be tested as soon as possible. There are clear, proven advantages to early treatment for HIV, and testing is the *only* way to know for sure.

For women who plan to become pregnant, testing is even more important. If a woman is infected with HIV, medical care and certain drugs given during pregnancy can lower the chance of passing HIV to her baby.

We all need to know our HIV status. HIV testing is important to everyone's health. Encourage your friends, family and loved ones to get tested. Assure them that their results are confidential!

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene offers free confidential testing and counseling centers throughout NYC. To find a center near you:

- **Text your Zip code to "Knowit" Or 566948;**
- **Call 311;**
- **Go to WWW.HIVTEST.ORG;**
- **There are also Testing and Counseling centers listed in your VidaCare Provider Directory under Supportive Services (Pg 221); or**
- **Call Member Services at 800-556-0689 for assistance.**

Sources : http://www.hivtest.org/faq.cfm#stdtest.; http://www.thebody.com/content/art17037.html.

You Have the Right to be Treated with Dignity and Respect.

Does someone close to you …

- Push or hit you?
- Humiliate you in public?
- Control your money?
- Tell you who to see, what to wear, what to do?
- Threaten to hurt you?
- Force you to have sex?
- Keep you from seeing friends and family?
- Threaten to report you to immigration officials?
- Threaten to take your children?

You might be in an abusive relationship.

TALK TO YOUR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER OR CASE MANAGER ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON

You can change things and there are people here to help you.

- ▲ **Emergencies call 9-1-1**
- ▲ NYC Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)
- ▲ **VidaCare** Domestic Violence Coordinator: Marva Deane @ (646) 786-1800

1-800-556-0689 (Member Services)

Fall Recipe: Salsa Rice and Beans

Ingredients:

- 1 can great northern beans
- 1 Jar of salsa (14 oz.)
- 2 cups instant brown rice
- 1 Tbsp crushed red pepper
- 1 Tbsp chili powder

Source: www.recipes.sparkpeople.com

Directions: Make the brown rice according to the package directions. Mix with the salsa, beans spices. (You can use beans and spices of your choice)

You Deserve To Be Healthy <u>and</u> Happy!

VidaCare members are entitled to counseling services.

Just because you are living with HIV, doesn't mean that it's normal for you to feel depressed or anxious. You deserve to feel as healthy as possible, both physically *and* mentally.

How do you know if you need help?

The following are <u>*some*</u> of the signs that you could benefit from mental health services:

- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that you used to find pleasurable, including sex,
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions,
- Feeling tired all the time,
- Trouble falling asleep <u>or</u> excessive sleeping,
- Irritability, restlessness,
- Loss of appetite <u>or</u> overeating,
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness,
- Pains, headaches, or stomach aches that do not improve with treatment, and/or
- Persistent sad, anxious, <u>or</u> "empty" feelings.

Are alcohol or drugs making your life unmanageable?

Depression and use of alcohol and/or drugs often go together. Getting help for your depression may help with your alcohol and/or drug issues.

What can mental health counseling do for you?

Dealing with issues that are bothering you may improve the situation and make you feel less worried, anxious or upset. Counseling services are available to assist you with different types of problems.

A Therapist or Counselor will be able to help you:

- Clarify a problem – some situations are difficult, understanding the issues can help
- Make a Plan - action steps that can be taken to resolve the issue
- Handle a crisis – help you look at available choices and the one that's right for you

Many concerns can be resolved quickly in a few visits; for issues that are more difficult, a counselor can set up a special plan just for you and spend time to help you resolve the problem.

<u>VidaCare Members are eligible to receive the care they need, included weekly therapy visits.</u>

Why is it especially important for persons living with HIV to pay attention to their mental health?

Research suggests that treating mental distress can improve survival and slow the progression of HIV.

Where can you get help?

Some people may feel uneasy about seeing a Therapist or Counselor for personal problems. However, at some point in their lives, most people are faced with problems that they need help with. Having a personal problem does not mean "I am having a nervous breakdown" or "I am crazy" or "I'm a failure." **<u>Getting help is a sign of strength.</u>** You can call **VidaCare's Mental Health Department's** toll free number at **1-866-752-5443.** and ask for an appointment with an experienced professional. Our staff will help you find the provider that's right for you!

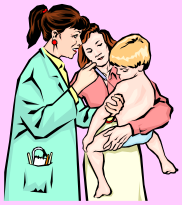
Sources: www.mayoclinic.com, www.thebody.com, www.nmha.org, www.who.int.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Infants and Children

Vaccinations prevent illness, disability, and death. Recent studies have confirmed the safety and importance of immunizations for infants and children. Make sure that your children are immunized against the following diseases:

- Hepatitis B1 (causes liver disease)
- Rotavirus (causes severe diarrhea)
- DPT: Diphtheria (causes nervous system damage), Tetanus (aka Lockjaw) , Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Pneumococcal (causes respiratory and other infections)
- Inactivated Poliovirus (Polio – causes paralysis)
- Influenza (Flu)
- Measles , Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)
- Hepatitis A (causes liver disease)
- Meningitis (a disease that attacks the brain and spinal cord)
- HPV (causes cervical cancer) *Gardasil® vaccine is recommended for young girls age 11-12.*



Adults

Immunizations aren't only for children. In fact, in New York City and throughout the U.S., 99% of the deaths that could be prevented by vaccination now occur in adults, not children. All people - infants and children, adolescents, adults, and older people - need regular immunizations to stay healthy. (www.nyc.gov)

Adults should talk to their Primary Care Providers about the following immunizations:

- HPV series for females up to age 26 if not yet vaccinated
- **For HIV+ persons** – your PCP will determine the need for the following based on your current health needs:
  - Tetanus, diphtheria (Td)
  - MMR
  - Varicella
  - Herpes zoster vaccine, 1 dose
  - Influenza
  - Pneumonia
  - Hepatitis A series
  - Hepatitis B series
  - Meningococcal vaccine

Sources: www.cdc.gov , www.nyc.gov

IMMUNIZATIONS CAN BE OBTAINED:

- **From your Primary Care Provider;**
- **Call 311 to get a vaccination schedule or for information on where you and your children get flu shots and other immunizations. Information is also available at www.nyc.gov/health/cir.; or**
- **Call VidaCare Member Services for assistance.**

Did you know that most VidaCare Members report satisfaction with the Plan most or all of the time?

- **83% are satisfied with Plan services**
- **79% are satisfied with the medical providers**
- **79% are satisfied with the Plan's case management services**
- **82% are satisfied with the substance abuse and mental health services**

Source: VidaCare Member satisfaction survey 2008

Reasons to Quit Smoking!

Health Reasons

♦Reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke, emphysema or bronchitis, and coronary heart disease, and cancers of the larynx, esophagus, lung, bladder, kidney, and cervix.

♦Reduce the chance of your children developing or suffering from worsened asthma, middle ear infections and bronchitis.

♦Reduce the chance of your family developing cancer, heart disease, and other diseases associated with breathing second-hand smoke.

♦Reduce the chance that your children will smoke.

Financial Reasons

♦More money in your pocket!!

Social Reasons

♦Less stress from friends, family and co-workers who are non-smokers.

10 ways to make quitting easier

Prepare yourself: Make a list of your reasons for quitting and read it often.

Pick a quit date: Get rid of ashtrays and lighters, and throw out all cigarettes.

Have a smoke-free car and home: It is healthier for others and will help you not smoke.

Get support and encouragement: Tell you family, friends, and coworkers that you are quitting and ask for their support.

Get a quit buddy: Ask a smoker to quit with you, or find someone who has already quit who you can talk to for support.

Notice what makes you want to smoke: Alcohol, coffee, and stress can make you feel like smoking. So can seeing others smoke; ask smokers you know not to light up in front of you.

Think About Using Quit Smoking Aids and Medications: The nicotine patch or gum, and medications such as Zyban (bupropion) and Chantix (varenicline) greatly reduce your cravings and can double or up to triple your chance of success. Talk to your doctor.

Help yourself cope: Drink a lot of water to help with cravings. Exercise to get rid of stress and improve your mood and health; a fast walk often does the trick.

Get your mind off smoking: Talk to a friend when you feel like smoking. Get busy with a simple task, eat a healthy snack, take a walk, or chew gum. Stay away from places and situations you associate with smoking.

Stay away from that first cigarette: Having even one can make you start up again. Cravings will decrease the longer you don't smoke.

<u>Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do for your health.</u>

Remember, *it is never too late* to stop smoking. If you need help or want to find a local quit smoking program, call 311 or VidaCare Member Services at 800-556-0689.

Source: http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/smoke/smoke2-cess.shtml