

NEWSLETTER

NY44 HEALTH BENEFITS PLAN TRUST | *End of Year 2024*

A Message from the Chair and Vice Chair of the NY44 Health Benefits Plan Trust

As 2024 comes to a close, we are pleased to provide our members with the year-end edition of the NY44 Health Benefits Plan Trust newsletter as an essential resource to support your healthcare needs.

This edition of the newsletter is filled with a number of healthy tips and suggestions to help you navigate the holiday season, including ways to manage seasonal affective disorder (SAD), office ergonomics and quality sleep management.

The NY44 Health Benefits Plan Trust is committed to supporting your health goals, including weight management. With this goal in mind, we are excited to announce our new partnership with WeightWatchers®, (WW) effective in early 2025.

WeightWatchers® has undergone a dramatic evolution from its origins as a points-based diet program. Today's WeightWatchers® reflects progressive well-being, focusing on foundational, sustainable and realistic lifestyle transformation rather than quick-fix dieting. WW's program recognizes that lasting change comes from understanding personal habits, emotional eating triggers, and developing healthy coping mechanisms, integrating behavioral psychology, mindfulness practices, and personalized coaching to address the whole person - not just the number on the scale.

This program will be available at no cost to our members.

As a helpful reminder, The NY44 Health Benefits Plan Trust continues to offer to members who qualify access to Brook+, a diabetes prevention program to help build lasting habits towards healthy weight and diabetes management.

We have included additional information about these programs and other helpful ideas on the following pages. Be sure to visit the NY44 website for up-to-date details including the WeightWatchers® program start date.

Our commitment remains simple: providing you with comprehensive and practical healthcare solutions while adapting to industry changes. Inside, you will find practical tips and resources to help you make the most of your benefits in the months ahead.

Best Regards,

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WeightWatchers

Scan the QR code for quick access to the latest updates about the WeightWatchers® program.



WeightWatchers

Weight Management

Coming in 2025!

To assist members in their health and well-being journey, the Trust has partnered with WeightWatchers® (WW) providing members a variety of weight loss program options. WeightWatchers® is no longer just about points and counting calories. WW has evolved into a comprehensive health management platform, broadening its resources, creating personalized programs, isolating individual conditions, and placing participating members into separate programs for wellness, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and more.

WeightWatchers® is a proven program that addresses behavioral issues, supporting change and education. WW provides effective clinical support without GLP-1s. The program provides support through dietitians and coaches, and community groups. WW focuses on food, activity, mindset and sleep.

WeightWatchers® provides users with a wide array of support resources to ensure members are supported throughout their journey. Please check our website for forthcoming updates about our exciting new partnership.



The Brook+ Diabetes Prevention Program

The NY44 Health Benefits Plan Trust continues to offer eligible members access to Brook+, a diabetes prevention program to help eligible members build lasting habits to achieve a healthy weight and reduce the risk of diabetes.

Brook+ is a digital health platform designed to support people with chronic health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and those focused on weight loss. For diabetes management, Brook+ is a digital 12-month Diabetes Prevention Program recognized by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that helps participating members build lasting habits to achieve a healthy weight and reduce the risk of diabetes - no classrooms or clinic visits are necessary.

Brook+ offers tools to track blood glucose levels, medication, and lifestyle factors, helping users maintain better control over their blood sugar. The app provides insights, reminders, and actionable guidance to help users manage their condition effectively in their day-to-day lives.

Important Coverage Update for 2025

As you may have noticed, GLP-1 drugs have been all over the news lately. Branded under names like Ozempic and Wegovy, GLP-1 drugs have been instrumental in managing type 2 diabetes. GLP-1's have also helped some people lose weight. Unfortunately, GLP-1 drugs are extremely expensive. We project that the cost to continue to cover these drugs for weight loss will add \$12 million in costs in 2025 alone.

Therefore, the Board of Trustees voted to change the coverage for these medications when prescribed for weight loss. Effective January 1, 2025, GLP-1 drug costs will only be **covered for members with a diabetes diagnosis.**

Members who continue to fill prescriptions for GLP-1 drugs prescribed for weight loss after December 31, 2024, will be responsible for the full cost of the medication.

If you are using GLP-1s for reasons other than diabetes, please talk to your Primary Care Physician (PCP) about potential alternatives.



Brook+ can also assist users in building sustainable habits through personalized support. The platform can track dietary intake, physical activity, and sleep, offering tailored advice to help users reach weight loss goals while considering the specific challenges faced by those with diabetes. By promoting lifestyle adjustments and integrating these efforts into daily routines, Brook+ aims to provide a holistic approach to managing diabetes and achieving healthy weight loss, ultimately supporting long-term health and well-being.

There is no charge to members for this program. If you would like to see if you qualify for the Brook+ program, please visit the NY44 Health Benefits Plan Trust website at <https://www.ny44.e1b.org/brook/> to learn more.

Ergonomics

Create a space that works for you!

Ergonomics is a health movement designed to create a comfortable and effective workspace. A customized workspace can support better mental and physical well-being and increased productivity.

Ergonomics includes:

- A comfortable desk chair
- Proper desk height
- Effective lighting
- Personalized and professional workspace
- Noise management
- Moving around and taking strategic breaks



An ergonomically sound workspace can reduce tension and stress and improve well-being.



Holiday Stress

November also means the official start of the holiday season. While the holidays can be joyous occasions, they can also lead to stress, anxiety, feelings of isolation, depression, and loneliness. Below are some tips to work your way through the holiday season.

- **Slow down:** Take a deep breath and try to enjoy the moment
- **Set realistic goals:** Lofty expectations, including New Years resolutions, can lead to anxiety
- **Ask for help:** Do not try to do everything
- **Accept your feelings:** It is ok to feel a myriad of emotion during the holidays
- **Exercise:** Stay active and move!

Self-care is crucial during this time. With these strategies in mind, you can navigate the holiday season and find moments of joy amidst the hustle and bustle.

Digital Wellness

The rise of digital devices have created new challenges for personal wellness. While these devices have been instrumental in monitoring and tracking our health through wearables and other helpful tracking devices, mobile phones, tablets, and computers now dominate our daily routines. Most of us are now tethered to our devices, utilizing them as gateways to social media, entertainment, etc. Habitual or even overuse of digital devices has led to several detrimental effects on personal health and well-being.

Impacts such as:

- **Physical health** – eye strain and posture issues
- **Productivity** – multi-tasking leading to distraction.
- **Mental health** – information overload, decision fatigue, and potentially social anxiety.
- **Safety** – devices often divert our attention while walking, driving, and even at our desks.

We encourage members to actively manage their device usage to help maintain healthy well-being effectively. Some steps include:

- **Current use awareness** – take time for personal use inventory. The results may surprise some users.
- **Establish boundaries** – set aside device-free times, including dinner, bedtime, and during work periods. This process includes limiting notifications and other potential distractions.
- **Create healthy habits** – avoid emotional triggers. Identify essential vs non-essential usage.

Device use will only continue to grow in the future during this technological age. The sooner users can establish good habits, the easier it is to manage device impact moving forward. We encourage members to take healthy steps toward effective device management.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and Mental Health in Winter

The shorter days and longer nights of winter can take a toll on our mental health. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons. Here's what you need to know:

Recognizing SAD Symptoms

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Having low energy and feeling sluggish
- Experiencing changes in appetite or weight
- Having difficulty sleeping or oversleeping



Coping Strategies

- **Light Therapy:** Consider changing your lighting. Look for light that mimics outdoor lighting. Outdoor lighting can cause a chemical change in the brain to lift your mood.
- **Regular Exercise:** Physical activity can help alleviate depression and anxiety. Even a daily 15-minute walk can make a difference.
- **Maintain Social Connections:** Stay in touch with friends and family, even if you don't feel like it.
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Meditation and mindfulness exercises can help manage stress and improve mood.

Productive sleep habits

While most of us focus on healthy habits while awake, did you know that effective health and wellness starts with how well you sleep? Healthy sleep is the foundation for effective well-being. Most of us need at least eight hours of sleep each night to function effectively. Sleep deprivation can lead to inattentiveness and ineffectiveness while negatively impacting decision-making.

Effective sleep habits include creating a positive sleep environment that works for you. This includes ensuring sufficient bedding, pillows, and lighting for quality sleep. A healthy environment includes limiting blue light from electronic and handheld devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime. We encourage members to limit electronic devices in the bedroom to promote a healthy sleep environment.

Studies have shown good sleep habits contribute to health in the following ways:

- **Immune System Support** – Quality sleep strengthens our immune system and helps us fight off illness.
- **Cognitive Function** – Effective sleep leads to better focus and decision-making abilities.
- **Physical and Mental Recovery** – Our bodies and minds need time to reset and repair. Sufficient sleep creates ample time for this to occur, reducing the risk of injury and anxiety and depression.

Talk to your Primary Care Physician (PCP) for more information about additional ways to control your sleep environment to encourage better health.





Healthcare Bluebook Engagement Game

Healthcare Bluebook is a valuable asset that allows you to compare costs between healthcare providers. Users can select a healthcare provider that offers high-quality care at lower costs.

Healthcare Bluebook provides a searchable database that lists the fair price range for many medical procedures based on actual costs. Price transparency allows patients to shop around, negotiate better deals, and avoid overpaying. You can even get a Green Reward for using a lower-cost provider.

To further aid NY44 Trust members we will once again be conducting the Healthcare Bluebook Engagement Game:

Bluebook Journey

December 9 through January 10, 2025

This year's game is designed not only to show members how to save money on medical care, but also how to navigate the Healthcare Bluebook website to make informed healthcare decisions. This year's game, "Bluebook Journey" adds an interactive twist introducing users to a specific health journey. Healthcare Bluebook helps you save money on medical procedures while ensuring quality care. Our simple search tool shows you cost comparisons between providers in your area - just like comparing prices when shopping online. Find the best value for services like imaging, and surgeries with the step-by-step guide to using Healthcare Bluebook. Members will also learn how to identify Green Care facilities. Green Care facilities are Bluebook Fair Price facilities. Selecting a Green Care facility enables users to get a reward. Rewards vary according to procedure.



Healthcare Bluebook™

Each step is interactive and informative, allowing new and experienced users to learn the basic nuances - most importantly, the advantages of using Healthcare Bluebook. Throughout the game, users can register and download the Healthcare Bluebook mobile app.

We are excited about this year's game. Not only is the game engaging, fun, and educational, but it also walks users through each possible step using Healthcare Bluebook. Best of all, it takes just minutes to complete. Users who complete the game and download the app on or before January 10, 2025, will be entered to win one of three \$50 Visa Gift Cards. Immediately following the Challenge's conclusion, Healthcare Bluebook will select three random NY44 Health Benefits Plan Trust members as winners of the Visa Gift Cards.

Get Started Today!

Scan the QR code with your phone or use the link below for direct access.

No sign up or registration required!

healthcarebluebook.com/cc/NY44

Download the app on your mobile device and log in to find quality providers anytime anywhere even at the time of referral. It's quick and easy!

Mobile Code: NY44

Call Member Support:
800-341-0504.





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