

My VNS Health Care Handbook



HOME CARE



HOME CARE

For more than 125 years, VNS Health has been dedicated to helping New Yorkers live healthy lives, safely and independently in their homes and communities.

VNS Health is committed to culturally sensitive care to meet the diverse needs of New York's communities. We provide welcoming, safe home health services to all individuals—regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Our care teams celebrate diversity and we are supportive of the unique differences of those we serve. So please feel free to share with us so we can make this experience positive for you.



VNS Health is proud to be accredited by the Community Health Accreditation Partner (CHAP), as well as by SAGECare with platinum level LGBTQ cultural competency credential.

Thank you for choosing VNS Health!

We're committed to patient satisfaction and will do whatever is possible to accommodate your specific needs. We want you to feel confident, comfortable and safe.

Your expert VNS Health care team has been carefully trained to:

- Be courteous and respectful of your wishes
- Listen to you carefully to understand your needs
- Help you manage any pain you might be experiencing
- Be as gentle as possible while providing the care
- Review your medications and help you manage them.
This includes reviewing their purpose and potential side effects
- Teach you about your condition
- Explain your care plan so that it is easy to understand
and so that you know what is coming next
- Be sure you can move around safely in your home

A patient survey may be mailed to you to ask you about your experiences with VNS Health. Your opinion counts and your responses will enable us to provide the best possible care to all of our patients. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey as soon as it arrives.

Thank you!

Understanding your plan of care

Home health care has been recommended for you by your doctor and what we can do for you depends on your situation and your doctor's plan.

The type of care, when and for how long services will be provided depends on your plan of care.

The care your doctor has ordered for you may include one or more of the following:

- **Nursing services** provided by registered nurses and licensed practical nurses who monitor your clinical condition, provide wound care, manage your medications, help you understand what to expect during your recovery
- **Rehabilitation therapy** by physical and occupational therapists or speech-language pathologists to assist in regaining strength and managing daily activities
- **Help with emotional or mental health needs**, provided by social workers or nurses
- **Assistance with personal care** like bathing, dressing, eating, meal preparation and more, provided by certified home health aides



It is important that you follow the treatment plan developed with your doctor and we will be there to help you keep you on track.

Understanding the role of a home health aide

If your plan of care includes home health aide services, here is some additional information about the type of care they provide. VNS Health assigns and supervises certified home health aides to provide personal care based on the plan developed with your doctor.

Services a home health aide may provide involve caring for you the patient; not the whole family. Here are some of the things home health aides can and cannot do:

Can Do	Cannot Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Help with bathing, dressing, eating<input type="checkbox"/> Light meal preparation<input type="checkbox"/> Light housekeeping in patient areas<input type="checkbox"/> Assistance with moving around<input type="checkbox"/> Light grocery shopping near the patient's home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Give medications to the patient<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy housework<input type="checkbox"/> Move heavy furniture<input type="checkbox"/> Use the telephone other than to call their agency<input type="checkbox"/> Handle finances

- A home health aide care plan will be kept in your Welcome folder and the aide will refer to this for information for your care needs.
- The aide should come to your home promptly. Many aides rely on public transportation so please allow 15 minutes delay on their arrival time. Please call your VNS Health care team phone number on the inside front pocket of your Welcome folder if the aide is more than 15 minutes late or leaves earlier than scheduled.
- The aide is required to wear identification from the agency.

For more information about home health aides, please see the **Important Information About Your Care** booklet in your Welcome folder.

Getting the most from your care with VNS Health

At **VNS Health**, our goals are to help you live, age and heal well where you feel most comfortable—in your own home, connected to your family and community.

In addition to the home care you are receiving, VNS Health offers a wide range of home- and community-based programs and services to meet your home health care needs, including:

Private home care services paid for out-of-pocket.

If you would like more services than what are currently being provided by your insurance, we offer customized services to meet your needs that can be purchased out of pocket. These services may include additional nursing care or rehabilitation therapy, as well as help with day-to-day activities or live-in/round-the-clock personal care and caregiver support services (see next page).

Medicare and Medicaid health plans.

VNS Health Health Plans give you benefits that help put you in control of your health.

Advanced illness and end-of-life care.

VNS Health Hospice Care provides expert care and support to ensure comfort, relief and peace of mind.



For more information about these services, visit our website at: vnshealth.org or call **1-800-675-0391**.

VNS Health Caregiver Support Services provide support, guidance and tools to help friends or family members with the many aspects of being a caregiver and provide peace of mind.

Geriatric Care Management

Sometimes managing care for yourself, a friend or your loved one can be challenging. Our Caregiver Support Services include Geriatric Care Management where a dedicated geriatric care manager oversees all aspects of care, including supervision of home care providers, home safety modifications, escort to doctor appointments, and coordination of financial and legal matters. Our dedicated geriatric care managers can help you care for yourself, your friend or family member. They help by:

- Assessing care needs
- Arranging for and monitoring in-home medical and personal care
- Researching and suggesting the right services
- Working with contractors to make sure the home is safe
- Taking you or your loved one to medical appointments
- Communicating with providers
- Keeping you up to date on instructions and test results
- Helping manage financial and legal issues
- Communicating with long-distance family members

These services are available on a private pay basis.



For more information, go to vnshealth.org/caregiversupport
or call **1-855-661-6274**.

Moving around safely in your home

Your VNS Health care team will work with you to be sure you are able to **move around safely** in your home.

Here are some things you can do to help avoid falling:

- Ask for help when you need to get up from your chair or bed or when doing activities you know you cannot do alone
- Sit at the edge of the bed before standing to help from feeling dizzy
- Do not rush. Be sure to take your time when moving around. Use a walker or cane as recommended by your doctor if you are unsteady on your feet
- Wear shoes that have non-slip soles. Avoid wearing just socks
- Install handrails in your bathroom and non-slip strips or a rubber mat in your bathtub
- Remove clutter. Don't leave any clothes, magazines, bags, or objects lying around on the floor. Be sure cords and wires are out of walking areas
- Remove or secure any loose rugs or mats
- Be sure rooms, hallways and staircases are well-lighted. Use nightlights



Behavioral health is an integral part of overall health

Your VNS Health care team is here to help you if you have concerns about how you have been feeling.

Many people face challenges like depression, anxiety, and trauma that can make it difficult to cope with daily life. As many as one in five older adults experience mental health concerns like stress, anxiety, fear, sadness, hopelessness, and loneliness. If not addressed, these concerns can negatively affect physical health. Good mental health contributes greatly to an overall feeling of positive well-being and can benefit everyone regardless of age.

Here are some signs and symptoms of mental health concerns:

- Fear and worry about issues such as money, family and health
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Changes in mood or energy level
- Withdrawing from the people and activities you enjoy
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Feeling sadness or hopelessness
- Frequent trouble remembering things
- Difficulty concentrating on typical tasks or facing routine chores
- Body aches and pains
- Having thoughts and memories that you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others

If you or a loved one are experiencing any of these signs and symptoms, please be sure to tell your doctor and your **VNS Health** care team. You can also reach out to: **NYC Well, 888-NYC-WELL, nycwell.cityofnewyork.us.**

Protecting yourself against COVID-19

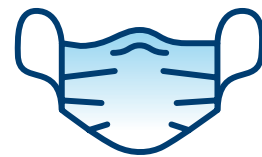
Your VNS Health team cares greatly about your well-being and **keeping you and your family healthy and safe.**

You can protect yourself and help stop the spread of COVID-19 by taking these everyday actions:

- Stay up to date with your COVID-19 vaccines by following CDC guidelines
- Follow all current local guidance about mask wearing and social gatherings
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Cover your cough and sneezes with a tissue, perform hand hygiene after discarding it

If you start to develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19, such as a fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, nausea, congestion or diarrhea, be sure to:

- Follow all isolation and quarantine guidance, including wearing a face mask
- Call your primary care physician
- Alert your VNS Health care team
- Get tested for COVID-19



During flu season, take steps to avoid getting the flu

Get a flu shot. One flu shot will protect you from the most common flu viruses. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone 6 months and older.

It is especially important for:

- People over 65 years old
- Young children
- Pregnant women
- Anyone with a chronic health condition like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease



Other important things you can do to protect against the flu:

- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

The common cold and the flu share many symptoms so it can be difficult to tell the difference between the two based on symptoms alone. Flu symptoms can begin abruptly and may be worse than cold symptoms. The symptoms of flu can include fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, and tiredness.

If you come down with cold or flu-like symptoms:

- Ask your nurse or doctor about medication
- Limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them
- Stay at home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (except to get medical care)
- If you must leave home, wear a facemask or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Clean your hands after discarding the tissue

As a part of your care, VNS Health encourages all caregivers (your nurse, rehab therapist, home health aide, etc.) to get vaccinated against the flu too. Sometimes caregivers decide not to get vaccinated for personal reasons. For those who decide not to get a flu shot, the NY State Department of Health requires that all healthcare personnel in your home wear a surgical mask when providing care. This law protects everyone.

Recognizing pain medication (opioid) addiction

Some prescription medications taken to relieve pain can become addictive and change a person's behavior. It is not the person's fault and there are treatments available. **It is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of opioid addiction, so it can be treated.**

A person addicted to pain relieving medications (opioids) may:

- Spend increasing amounts of time alone
- Sleep at odd hours of the day
- Have insomnia or sleep too much
- Experience unpredictable mood shifts
- Struggle to concentrate and be easily distracted
- Have a hard time making decisions
- Forget or stop grooming activities
- Lose interest in things that were previously important
- Begin to let life obligations slip
- Have slowed, uncoordinated movements
- Have stomach issues such as cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation
- Find that they are craving the medication
- Develop a tolerance and want more of the medication
- Spend increasing amounts of time seeking and using it
- Find they cannot stop using it, despite knowledge of risks
- Experience withdrawal when stopping
- Go from doctor to doctor to obtain multiple prescriptions
- Refuse to undergo certain tests or exams
- Claim to lose pills or hoard pills

If you think you or a loved one is experiencing any of these signs of pain medication or opioid addiction, be sure to tell your VNS Health care team as soon as possible.

Additionally, there are many places you can call for help:

NYC Well
888-NYC-WELL
nycwell.cityofnewyork.us

NYC OASAS HOPEline
877-8 HOPE NY (846-7369)
www.oasas.ny.gov

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Hopeline
800-622-2255
www.ncadd.org

My Action Plan

Be sure to call the VNS Health Customer Care Center at 1-866-949-8205 for any changes in your medical condition.

VNS Health nurses are on call **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**, to speak with you should you experience any of the following symptoms:

General changes

- No bowel movement in 3 days
- New skin problems
- Change in balance, coordination, strength
- Fall with mild injury or no injury
- Change in mental status
- Pain medication is not effective

Urinary changes

- Foul odor to urine
- Catheter not draining
- Back or flank pain
- Are not able to urinate
- Bloody, cloudy urine or change in urine color
- Body aches

Diabetic changes

- Sudden weakness
- Uncontrollable thirst or hunger
- Sudden dizziness
- Increased urination
- Sweating spells
- Frequent headaches
- Itching
- Drowsiness
- Blood sugar level greater than _____ or less than _____

Heart or lung changes

- Productive or frothy cough; new congestion
- Increased shortness of breath
- More swelling in your legs or feet
- Increased weakness
- Weight gain of 3 or more pounds in 1 day; or 5 or more pounds in one week.
My current weight is: _____

Too much blood thinner

- Bleeding from nose, mouth, gums, rectum
- Bruising
- Tarry stools

Signs of wound infections

- Increased redness
- More or different drainage
- Wound / area is more painful
- Temperature of 100 or more
- New odor from a wound

Call 911 if you experience any of the following:

- A fall with a broken bone or bleeding
- Chest pain that medication does not help
- Difficulty in breathing
- Are unable to wake the patient
- Severe or prolonged bleeding
- Severe or prolonged pain

911 should always be called if you have an emergency that requires immediate attention from either the police, fire department, or ambulance.

My Daily Health Log

Date	Blood Pressure	Weight	Blood Sugar Before Breakfast	Glucose After Breakfast	Glucose Before Lunch	Glucose After Lunch	Glucose Before Dinner	Glucose After Dinner	Glucose Before Bed

My Appointment Calendar

Use this calendar to schedule visits with your care team.

Be sure to follow your doctor's treatment plan.
Make and keep all recommended medical appointments.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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My Important Health Care Contact Information

	Name (and specialty)	Phone Number
Home Health Care	VNS Health Customer Care Center	1-866-949-8205 (TTY 711)
My Primary Care Physician		
My Specialty Doctor		
My Specialty Doctor		
My Pharmacy		
Other		

THANK YOU



Many times, patients who receive care from VNS Health wish to express their gratitude for the care they received. A kind note or a gift in honor of your VNS Health nurse, home health aide or clinician is a great way to thank them and recognize their care and compassion.

Did you know?

- VNS Health is a nonprofit health care organization that provides home- and community-based care and outreach to tens of thousands of New Yorkers of every background and neighborhood.
- We are a safety-net for our most vulnerable and at-risk neighbors—the chronically ill, the frail elderly, adults, children and families, and those at the end of life. Our community programs can be a lifeline—ensuring access to care.
- We provide health care to thousands of under- and uninsured individuals who otherwise would've gone without the care they need if not for VNS Health.

To find out more about our community programs or to consider making a gift, please call our Development Office at **212-609-1525** or visit vnshealth.org/in-the-community/giving/. A gift to VNS Health helps us help other New Yorkers.

We appreciate the consideration.



For any questions about your care or if there is a change in your condition, be sure to call the VNS Health Customer Care Center **24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-866-949-8205 (TTY 711).**

We have nurses available to help answer your questions.

If there is ever a reason where you need to be hospitalized, you can request to have your VNS Health home care services resumed by informing the hospital that you wish to receive care from VNS Health. You have the freedom to choose care from the home care company that you prefer.