



**CONTACT:**

Divendra Jaffar

212-908-3380/646-952-3243

[jaffadi@metroplus.org](mailto:jaffadi@metroplus.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **MetroPlusHealth Expands Free Access to Dietitians to City Workers & Their Families Under Gold Plan**

*MetroPlusHealth's dietitian benefit package is among the most generous in the nation  
New expansion of ongoing care will provide City workers with the support for healthy lifestyle changes*

**(New York, NY – August 2, 2022)** With healthy food costs and diet-related illnesses on the rise in the City, [MetroPlusHealth](#), New York City's high-quality and affordable health plan, today announced its \$0 dietitian benefit expansion for City workers enrolled in its Gold Plan. MetroPlusHealth is the first commercial insurance provider to offer free dietitian visits in the country. The expanded offer would allow City workers and eligible family members in the Plan to receive free nutritional guidance with 26 visits with a dietitian expert per year. The program is currently available for Gold members with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and high cholesterol. With this expansion, almost 20,000 current members will be eligible. The benefit also covers dietitian services as prevention: healthier diets reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease. Nutrition is not a one-size-fits-all solution, which is why a personalized plan from expert dietitian advice is essential.

"Healthy food is medicine that all New Yorkers should have access to," said **New York City Mayor Eric Adams**. "Expert dietitian advice can have a profound impact on New Yorkers' health and well-being. Changing my diet helped transform my life, putting my type 2 diabetes into remission. Everyone, especially people living with chronic diet-related conditions, should be able to meet with a dietitian to learn how they can take charge of their health. I'm proud that City employees and their families on the MetroPlusHealth Gold plan will now have access to dietitian visits at no cost to help lead a healthier life."

"We are excited to be offering this expanded benefit to New York City workers," said **Dr. Talya Schwartz, President and CEO of MetroPlusHealth**. "We know that poor diet and unhealthy weight were challenges even before the pandemic, and it has increased vulnerability to the COVID-19 virus. New Yorkers want change, and change takes time. We acknowledge that with ongoing care, coaching and mentorship, New Yorkers can access the healthy lifestyle they deserve and maintain it over time. As a physician, I know that food is medicine, and medicine does not always come as a pill. Programs like these create an exciting step forward for our City and its employees."

“Earlier this year, NYC Health + Hospitals and NYC Mayor Adams announced the expansion of our Lifestyle Medicine Program to six new public health care sites across New York City — the most comprehensive expansion of lifestyle medicine programming in the U.S.,” **said Dr. Mitchell Katz, President and CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals.** “Through our health insurance plan, New York City employees can access the Lifestyle Medicine Program, which is now available at no cost for them and their families. Those enrolled will receive a full medical evaluation by a team physician, with special attention to current lifestyle behaviors and social needs. They will also meet individually with a dietitian and a health coach and participate in group education.”

“I am thrilled that MetroPlusHealth is expanding access to dietitian services,” **said Dr. Michelle McMacken, FACP, DipABLM, Executive Director of Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine at NYC Health + Hospitals.** “What we eat is a critical factor in our long-term health, and everyone deserves the support of a dietitian to learn how to make nutritious foods and meals a core part of their lifestyle.”

“Too many New York City residents consume foods high in saturated fats, added sugars and sodium. A large proportion of New Yorkers do not eat enough fruits, vegetables and whole grains, putting them at risk for heart disease and stroke,” **said Dr. Rafael Ortiz, President of the American Heart Association Board of Directors in New York City and Chief Neuro-Endovascular Surgery at Lenox Hill Hospital.** “The American Heart Association applauds New York City’s efforts to keep City workers healthy, and we look forward to advancing similar effective policies to help support our City’s nutritional needs.”

“Strong evidence supports the effectiveness of Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) provided by Registered Nutritionists (RDNs) to achieve and maintain optimal blood glucose targets,” **said Laura Hieronymus, DNP, MSEd, RN, MLDE, BC-ADM, CDCES, FASCES, Vice President of the American Diabetes Association, Health Care Programs.** “The American Diabetes Association applauds this expansion of coverage for nutrition education and is hopeful that such services will enable more individuals with diabetes to adopt healthy eating habits. Given the cost-effectiveness of lifestyle behavior modification to prevent or delay type 2 diabetes, services such as the diabetes prevention program should be available to people at risk for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes.”

“By increasing accessibility of dietitian visits, MetroPlusHealth will empower patients to advance their nutritional knowledge and competency and cut through the confusion of how to nourish their best health,” **said Dr. Cate Collings, FACC, MS, DipABLM, President of American College of Lifestyle Medicine.** “MetroPlusHealth and NYC are delivering on food as medicine and are leaders in crafting a path to better health outcomes, putting lifestyle medicine at the

core of true value-based health care. Just imagine what could happen if this approach is expanded to other forward-thinking health plans!”

“Lifestyle modification, including nutrition counseling with dietitian services, is a pivotal part of reducing the burden of heart disease,” **said Dr. Srihari S. Naidu, President of the New York Chapter of the American College of Cardiology.** “Making dietitian services easily accessible and free of charge for patients with diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol is something all health plans should do, and we applaud the City for taking this head-on in their updated coverage decision.”

“We are beyond thrilled that MetroPlus**Health** is offering this \$0 dietitian benefit expansion. This will give countless New Yorkers personalized and creative approaches to manage their health through diet. This will make a profound difference in the lives of New Yorkers and generations to come,” **said Theresa Gentile, MS, RDN, CDN, New York City Media Representative of New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.**

Improved nutrition can make a profound positive difference in health outcomes. Offering lifestyle services to more New Yorkers is a big step towards achieving health care equity and a fresh start. In February 2022, Mayor Adams and NYC Health + Hospitals' [expansion of lifestyle medicine services citywide](#) represented the most comprehensive expansion of this programming in the U.S. These programs can change individuals’ lives by treating, preventing, and in some cases, even reversing common lifestyle-related chronic diseases. MetroPlus**Health**’s program serves as a complement to Mayor Adams’ [recently announced](#) plan to help New Yorkers recover their health post-pandemic.

This new program is just one part of MetroPlus**Health**’s ongoing commitment to making New Yorkers healthier. Earlier this month, MetroPlus**Health** [announced](#) a free medically tailored meal service in collaboration with God's Love We Deliver. Aimed at improving overall health outcomes, the no-cost program is open to eligible Medicaid members living with chronic illnesses.

MetroPlus**Health** Gold is available to **ALL** New York City employees, their qualified partners and eligible dependents, and non-Medicare eligible retirees. The Gold Plan provides comprehensive benefits with a \$0 employee premium with the basic plan, \$0 deductibles, and \$0 co-insurance. To learn more about MetroPlus**Health**’s services, please visit [www.metroplus.org](http://www.metroplus.org).

###

### **About MetroPlusHealth**

Since 1985, MetroPlus**Health** has built a reputation for providing access to affordable, quality health care to residents across New York City. MetroPlus**Health** is the plan of choice for over 670,000 New Yorkers and has a five-star rating based on the State's 2020 Consumer's Guide to Medicaid and Child Health Plus Managed Care Plans in New York City. The health plan's robust network of primary care doctors and specialists includes many independent community providers. Culturally sensitive, and fluent in more than 40 languages, MetroPlus**Health's** staff is as diverse as the great City it serves. For more information about MetroPlus**Health** plans, benefits, and services, visit [www.metroplus.org](http://www.metroplus.org) and join the conversation at [facebook.com/metroplushealth](https://www.facebook.com/metroplushealth) and Twitter [@metroplushealth](https://twitter.com/metroplushealth). MetroPlus**Health** is a wholly-owned subsidiary of NYC Health + Hospitals, the nation's largest public health system.