

THE TRUSTEE

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February is American Heart Month

For the last fifty years, February has been celebrated as American Heart Month to educate and urge Americans to join the battle against heart disease. According to the CDC, “heart disease is the **leading cause of death** for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States.” You can reduce your risk by knowing the warning signs, seeing a doctor regularly, taking medication as prescribed and choosing a healthy lifestyle. Small changes can make a big difference to improve heart health. Here are some tips to help:

Don’t smoke or use tobacco – The chemicals in smoke can damage the heart and blood vessels. The good news is your heart begins to improve in as little as one day after quitting!

Exercise- try to get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week. Walking is an excellent way to clear your head, reduce your stress, control your weight and reduce the chances of developing other conditions that may put a strain on your heart. If you have not been exercising, check with your doctor for recommendations, but start slow and work towards increasing your time and intensity.

Eat a healthy diet- Protect your heart and maintain a healthy weight by eating foods such as fruits and vegetables, beans and other legumes, lean meats and fish, fat free and low-fat dairy, whole grains and healthy fats such as oil.

Get quality sleep- Most adults need seven hours of sleep each night. Research has found that sleep is essential to brain health. Deep sleep allows the brain to clear away the toxins of the day and improves clarity. It also helps to reduce the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, heart attack, diabetes, and more. Maintaining a regular sleep routine is essential for good health.

Manage stress- Developing healthy coping mechanisms such as exercise, meditating, and relaxing can improve your heart health.

Get regular health screenings- High blood pressure and high cholesterol can damage your heart and blood vessels. Regular screenings and if needed, using prescribed medications as directed, can help diminish your risks. For more information go to [Heart Disease | cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/)

(Adapted from cdc.gov)

Save a Life

On another heart note – you can help save a life. On January 3, 2023, the Buffalo Bills 24 year old player Damar Hamlin suffered a cardiac arrest on the field. He was saved by the CPR performed by medical personnel. As a result of his experience, he has teamed up with the American Heart Association in challenging everyone to learn CPR. You can learn “Hands only CPR” in sixty seconds. Learning this simple CPR could save the life of someone you know. For more information go to [Damar Hamlin's #3forHeart™ CPR Challenge | American Heart Association](#)

WithMe Health / Manifest Mail Order Pharmacy

Our transition to our new pharmacy benefits manager WithMe Health and new mail order pharmacy, Manifest is complete. The responses from members have been overwhelmingly positive. Both entities are providing our members with efficient and helpful service. Thank you to all who have let us know how happy you are with both WithMe and Manifest Mail order pharmacy.

Members are reminded to present the **new cards** with the **WithMe** logo on the back to their doctors and pharmacies. Also please review the information on medication cost sharing included in the WithMe booklet sent in December. There are three tiers of payments for both 30 day retail and 90 day mail order prescriptions.

30- Day Retail			90 Day- Retail		
Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Preferred Generic	Preferred Brands	Non-Preferred Brands and Generics	Preferred Generic	Preferred Brands	Non-Preferred Brands and Generics
\$15	\$40	\$80	\$20	\$60	\$120

Preferred generic are drugs that are generally less expensive equivalents of name brand drugs. Preferred brands are name brand drugs, which tend to be more costly. Non-preferred brands and generic are drugs that are available from CanaRx, but members have chosen not to use that service.

Medications from CanaRx are free to members. There are no co-pays. The Trust is charged for the medication, but the member is not. Members are encouraged to check the CanaRx website to see if their maintenance drugs are available. If the drug is on the list, set up your account and have your doctor fax your prescription directly to CanaRX. If you prefer, you can get a written script for the medication and send it in. Once your account is set up, your medications will be delivered to you at no cost. To see what is available go to www.ktfmeds.com. Once on the KTF page, select “medications” from the choices along the top, and search the medications available. If your medication is available follow the simple directions for enrolling and sending prescriptions. (Please note that only your doctor can fax the prescriptions directly to CanaRx.)

COVID Update

The COVID Pandemic Health Emergency remains in effect for now. Although the numbers suffering serious debilitating effects or death from the virus have decreased, the virus remains active. One reason the decreases is the large number of people who have received the vaccine and the boosters. The latest variant is the highly contagious XBB.1.5. While the current bivalent vaccines were not designed for this variant, they are providing some protection against it. The CDC recommends that people ages 5 years and older receive one updated (bivalent) booster if it has been at least 2 months since their last COVID-19 vaccine dose, whether that was:

- Their final primary series dose, or
- An original (monovalent) booster
- People who have received more than one original (monovalent) booster are also recommended to get an updated (bivalent) booster. The updated (bivalent) boosters protect against both the original virus that causes COVID-19 and the Omicron variants.

Free vaccines, with no charges to Trust members or to your Trust, are available from the Ulster County Department of Health. Check out their COVID website at [COVID-19 Vaccination Resource Center – Ulster County COVID-19 Information \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](https://www.ulstercountyny.gov/covid-19) The Best Buy at the Hudson Valley Mall site will be closing. The only remaining date for free vaccines people 12 years and older is February 25, 2023. Here are the appointment times.

- 02/25: Best Buy at Hudson Valley Mall, 1st dose Pfizer or Moderna (ages 12+), [\(11AM - 2PM\)](#)
- 02/25: Best Buy at Hudson Valley Mall, 2nd dose Pfizer or Moderna (ages 12+), [\(11AM - 2PM\)](#)
- 02/25: Best Buy at Hudson Valley Mall, additional/3rd dose Pfizer or Moderna (for moderately to severely immunocompromised, 18+), [\(11AM - 2PM\)](#)
- 02/25: Best Buy at Hudson Valley Mall, Bivalent Booster dose Pfizer or Moderna (ages 18+), [\(11AM - 2PM\)](#)
- 02/25: Best Buy at Hudson Valley Mall, single dose Johnson & Johnson/Janssen (for ages 18+), [\(11AM - 2PM\)](#)

In March, free vaccines will be available, by appointment only, at the Ulster County Health department. Please visit the above web page for more information, as it is updated regularly.

Retiree Medicare Reimbursement Part B

Reimbursement of Medicare Part B standard premium was a long-standing practice by the district. However, recently this practice has been challenged by other school districts and public entities. To protect our members, during the most recent negotiations of Kingston Teachers' Federation contract, language was added to the contract to provide for Medicare Part B and IRMAA reimbursement. This language included a board policy to include all prior retirees. Beginning in March of 2023, the district will request proof of payment amounts yearly. The district will be sending the letter requesting evidence. Members must submit the information in order to get reimbursed. Retirees will receive reimbursement in two payments. The first half will be reimbursed in June and the second half in December. Acceptable proof is your Social Security Benefits Verification Statement from the Social Security Administration or a copy of your SSA 1099. Contact Amanda Wells at the Kingston City School central offices for more information.

If you are a retiree who did not respond to the district letter in the fall of 2022, and did not receive Medicare reimbursement for 2022, you can still submit. Send a copy of your Social Security Benefits Verification Statement from the Social Security Administration or a copy of your SSA 1099, along with a request for reimbursement immediately.

COVID Immunizations Payment from the District

The Kingston Teachers' Federation contract language states:

"At such time as the Ulster County Health Department declares that the danger exists of any disease reaching epidemic proportions, the District shall, in the of those diseases for which there is immunization, provide such immunization free of charge to the members of the teachers' unit who request it."

At the request of the Trust, the KTF filed a grievance for reimbursement of monies spent by the Trust, for members who received COVID vaccines for a fee. The district and the KTF settled the grievance with the district agreeing to pay the cost for active members who received the vaccines that were charged to the Trust Fund, during the 2021-2022 school year. The Trust is awaiting the payment from the district.

Kingston Trust Website

Please check out the Kingston Trust Fund website for current information. The website is updated regularly. Go to <http://www.ktftrustfund.com/> for the latest information and for reimbursement forms.