



Healthy and Connected Member Newsletter - Oct. 29, 2024

Healthy and Connected is the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services' (SCDHHS) member e-newsletter. Healthy and Connected features tips and tools to help you and your loved ones connect to resources and live healthier lives.

Taking Care of Our Lungs



It's easy to forget about the job our lungs do every day, bringing oxygen into our bloodstream. Even when we're not thinking about it, our bodies still breathe air into our lungs. October is Healthy Lung Month. It's a good time to remember to keep your lungs healthy so they can continue to do their job. Our bodies have a natural defense system meant to protect our lungs by keeping dirt and germs away.

But there are things the National Lung Association says we can do to reduce the risk of lung disease.

Not smoking. Cigarette smoking is a major cause of lung cancer. Smoking can narrow the air passages and make it harder to breathe. Over time, cigarette smoke can destroy lung tissue and cause changes that can grow into cancer.

Avoiding exposure to air pollutants. The air quality inside your home is important. Things in the air, like secondhand smoke, chemicals, mold and radon, can all cause or worsen lung disease. Outdoor air quality can vary. Avoid exercising by high traffic areas and

standing near burning wood or trash. Visit airnow.gov to find out the air conditions in your area.

Get regular checkups with your doctor. Getting checked by a doctor can help prevent diseases, like lung disease. It can go unnoticed until it is serious. Adult Healthy Connections Medicaid members are covered for a checkup once every two years. Healthy Connections Medicaid children are covered for a well-child visit every year.

Remember to exercise. No matter your age, body type or abilities, being active can help your lungs stay healthy.

Visit the South Carolina Department of Public Health's (DPH's) [website](#) to learn more about lung cancer risks, symptoms, screenings and other resources near you.

Preventing Type 2 Diabetes

Diabetes is a disease that takes place when a person's pancreas doesn't make enough insulin, or when the body can't effectively use the insulin it makes. Insulin is a hormone that regulates our blood sugar. There are three types of diabetes. Type 1 is when there's not enough insulin produced in the body. Its cause is unknown. Gestational diabetes takes place during pregnancy. A pregnant woman with this type is at a higher risk of complications during their pregnancy and at delivery. The most common type of diabetes is type 2. More than [95% of people](#) with diabetes have this type. It is usually preventable.

Type 2 diabetes stops the body from using insulin the right way. That can lead to high blood sugar levels. Over time, type 2 diabetes can cause real damage to the body. The good news is there are things we can do to help [lower the chances](#) of this type of diabetes.

- Losing weight can help prevent or delay diabetes by losing five to seven percent of your starting weight.
 - Getting at least 30 minutes of exercise five days a week can also help. If you haven't been active, start slowly. You should also speak with your doctor about what activities are best for you.
 - Eating healthier foods and smaller portions can help reduce the number of calories you eat. Choosing foods lower in fat and drinking water instead of soda also helps.
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November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Seeing your doctor for a checkup and blood test can help with early diagnosis. It can also help you know if you're at risk. Healthy Connections Medicaid adult members are covered for a physical once every two years. Healthy Connections Medicaid children are covered for a well-child visit every year.

Managed Care Organizations' Annual Star Rating






Healthy Connections Medicaid has five managed care organizations (MCOs). An MCO is a healthcare company, also called a health plan. They cover a variety of providers like doctors, hospitals and specialists to meet Medicaid members' health needs. Most members may choose to enroll in one of the five MCOs. The options are:

- Absolute Total Care
- Healthy Blue by BlueChoice of South Carolina
- Molina Healthcare of South Carolina
- First Choice by Select Health
- Humana Healthy Horizons in South Carolina

Each MCO is different. Members may choose which one is best for their own health needs.

All MCOs are reviewed every year by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA). The NCQA grades health plans on the quality of care patients receive. They also rate how happy patients are with their care. All factors go into the final scores.

The 2024 ratings are listed below:

MCO	Star Rating
Molina	3.5 
BlueChoice	3 
Select Health	3.5 
Absolute Total Care	3.5 
Humana	3 

Read more about MCO coverage at [SCChoices.com](https://www.sccchoices.com).

Understanding Pregnancy and Infant Loss

There are different reasons a miscarriage or stillbirth could happen. In the most recent [report](#) from DPH, there were 392 infants in South Carolina who died during the first year of life. The leading cause was birth defects. The second was disorders related to premature birth. To highlight this issue, October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month.

A miscarriage happens when a baby dies before 28 weeks of pregnancy. Stillbirth is when a baby dies after 28 weeks. Newborn deaths can happen from preterm births, birth defects, health issues and more. But pregnancy and infant loss are more common among groups facing health differences. These relate to a variety of things like income, education, work status and access to care. It's key to know how to lower the risks and learn about the health differences that affect you.

Losing a pregnancy or an infant can happen to anyone and can be hard to cope with. If you or someone you know has lost a baby, feelings of grief are normal. Talking to a loved one or a professional can help. There are ways to support yourself or someone in need.

- Connect with a doctor.
- Stay active every day.
- Speak with a grief counselor or spiritual leader.
- Eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables.
- Join a support group to talk and share feelings.

Healthy Connections Medicaid covers pregnant women and new mothers for 12 months postpartum. The coverage includes full Medicaid benefits for women who qualify for Medicaid because they are pregnant. Learn more about what you can do to have the healthiest pregnancy possible on DPH's [website](#).

Youth Vaping: A Guide for Parents

As parents, it's our job to help guide our children through tough choices. By talking openly about vaping and staying informed, we can help our kids make healthier decisions. Vaping is more common for kids and teens. It is crucial to know what it is and how it can affect your child's health.

What is Vaping?

E-cigarettes and vapes are the same thing. The term "vaping" means using an electronic cigarette/vape. E-cigarettes/vapes heat nicotine, flavorings and other chemicals to create an aerosol that is inhaled. Nicotine is the same addictive substance found in normal cigarettes.



Since e-cigarettes/vapes are offered in candy, fruit and dessert flavors, they are very appealing to kids and teens.

Learn More

Vaping is not safe. It can cause permanent lung damage, increased heart rate and higher risk of heart attack. Nicotine is more harmful for teenagers because it changes the way their brains develop. Nicotine use can cause mood swings, problems with attention span, lack of impulse control and difficulty learning in young people.

You can find help to learn more about vaping. If you think your teen is vaping, there are resources to help you feel more confident in talking to your teen about it. For more info, follow the links below.

[Vape Talk](#) (Smokefree SC) – This is a virtual or in-person presentation on vaping facts for parents. It includes tips on how to have the vape talk with your teen.

[DPH vaping webpage](#) – This page gives vaping info for both youth and adults. It includes free quit-support options.

[American Lung Association](#) – This online guide contains tips, facts and approaches to talk to your teen about vaping.

Lastly, be a good role model. If you use nicotine products, try quitting. [The Great American Smokeout](#) is observed in November. This is a great chance to try even a mini-quit. Visit the [DPH Tobacco Cessation webpage](#) for more free help on how to quit.

Breast Cancer Awareness: Keeping an Eye on the Signs

October might be closely linked with orange for the pumpkins, changing leaves and fall decorations. But there's another color connected to October, and it's pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It's important to be able to spot possible [signs and symptoms](#) of breast cancer. This can include:

1. A lump or thickening in the breast or underarm area.
2. Changes in the skin on the breast area. This could include skin getting red, scaly or swollen.
3. Pores getting larger on the breast. Some say it is like an orange peel's texture.
4. Tender nipples.
5. Unexplained shrinking, swelling or change in size of the breast. Especially if it's only on one side.

Seeing just one or two of the signs does not necessarily mean you have breast cancer. But you should discuss it with your doctor. Getting a breast cancer screening is one of the best ways to get an early diagnosis. South Carolina was [ranked ninth](#) in the nation in 2024 for women with up-to-date breast cancer screenings.

Healthy Connections Medicaid covers breast cancer screenings for women ages 40-74 years old. Screenings are recommended for this age group once every two years. People not otherwise eligible for Medicaid may qualify for our Breast and Cervical Cancer program. If the person meets the requirements, it covers treatment for those with breast cancer. Read more about it [here](#).



Fighting Flu this Season

Influenza, better known as flu, is a disease that can affect people differently. For some, it could mean a few days of missing school or work because you feel bad. But for others, it can be more serious and can lead to hospitalization or even death.

Flu season in South Carolina has started. Getting a flu shot each year can help reduce the risk of getting flu and any of its serious complications. These could include ear infections, pneumonia, sinus infections and worsening of chronic health issues.

When someone gets a flu vaccine, it causes their body to make antibodies after about two weeks. The antibodies protect against flu. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) notes a flu vaccine is made each year to fight the types of flu expected to be most common for that upcoming season. All flu vaccines for this season help protect against three different flu viruses.

Everyone six months and older in the U.S. is encouraged to get a flu vaccine. Healthy Connections Medicaid full-benefit members can receive a flu shot for free. Kids can get the shot from their doctor. Adults can get their shot from any in-network pharmacy or their primary care doctor.

DPH gathers flu data for the state and releases a weekly report called Flu Watch. The report shares the number of people hospitalized that week from the flu, any deaths and more. Read more about DPH's flu updates [here](#).

ADHD in Adults

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a mental health disorder. It can cause problems like making it hard to pay attention and impulsive actions. Symptoms usually start in early childhood. For adults with ADHD, it remains as they get older. Sometimes ADHD is not diagnosed until the person is an adult. ADHD in adults can lead to unstable relationships, poor work performance and other problems. Symptoms may decrease as people age, but symptoms may also continue to affect daily living for adults.

If you're an adult and unsure if you may have ADHD, some signs may include:

- Acting without thinking
- Problems prioritizing
- Poor time management and planning
- Problems focusing
- Restlessness or excessive activity
- Frequent mood swings
- Hot tempered
- Trouble coping with stress

ADHD is diagnosed when symptoms are serious enough to cause problems in more than one area of your life. It's also a sign of ADHD when the symptoms can be traced back to when you were a child.

If you think you may have ADHD, talk with your doctor. Full benefit Healthy Connections Medicaid adults can get a psychiatric exam. This includes a screening that can diagnose ADHD. Full benefit Healthy Connections Medicaid children are also eligible for a screening. If diagnosed, prescribed [ADHD medication](#) is covered for members. Learn more about ADHD in adults from the [Mayo Clinic](#).

Keeping our Babies' Sleep Safe

Whether you're a parent, grandparent, caretaker or babysitter, it's key to know the right ways to care for a baby. With newborns sleeping 12 or more hours a day, making a proper sleep environment for a baby is one of the biggest ways to keep them safe. October is Safe Sleep and SIDS Awareness Month.



SIDS stands for sudden infant death syndrome. Although the cause for SIDS is unknown, there are ways parents can help [reduce the risk](#) of sleep-related infant deaths.

- Place babies on their backs to sleep at night and for naps.
- Use a firm, flat sleep surface covered only with a fitted sheet.
- Feed your baby human milk if you can.
- Share a room with the baby for at least the first six months. Give the baby their own sleep space, like a crib, separate from your bed.
- Offer the baby a pacifier for naps and at night once they're feeding well.
- Stay smoke and vape-free during pregnancy. After birth, keep the baby's environment smoke and vape-free.
- Do not let the baby get too hot. Keep their head and face uncovered during sleep.
- Follow your doctor's advice on vaccines, checkups and other health issues for your baby.
- Give babies lots of "tummy time" while they're awake and being watched.

Baby monitors aren't effective at preventing SIDS. If you choose to use a monitor for other reasons, make sure to follow safe sleep guidance to reduce the baby's risk. Do not swaddle the baby once they start to roll over. It also does not reduce the risk of SIDS.

Updates to Medicaid Benefits

Your health is important to us! Healthy Connections Medicaid has added new benefits to help you get better care. These changes are for all full-benefit Medicaid members. It applies if you are in a managed care plan or not.

There are now more options to get psychiatric care for children and adults. Members can now use intensive outpatient and partial hospitalization programs. This might be the right care when a member doesn't need to be in a hospital setting, but they may need more

help than an out-of-hospital program can give. This provides medically necessary help without needing to go to a hospital.

Another update in this area includes the coverage of psychiatric Collaborative Care Model services. This model uses a joint care approach. It allows your primary care doctor to give treatment for your behavioral health needs with support from a team of other specialized healthcare professionals.

Finally, SCDHHS' pharmacy benefits administrator name has changed. It used to be known as Magellan Rx Management. It is now Prime Therapeutics. Benefits, procedures and contact information have not changed. Healthy Connections Medicaid members enrolled in fee-for-service with questions about their pharmacy benefits should call the Prime Therapeutics Beneficiary Call Center. The number is (800) 834-2680. They are open 24/7.

Online Eligibility Tools

Did you know you can do many things for your Medicaid eligibility online? Healthy Connections Medicaid members, you can apply for Medicaid, update your contact info, submit your annual review, check your eligibility or annual review status, upload documents and more. Go to apply.scdhhs.gov to find these tools or scan the QR code to the right.



Thank you for reading Healthy and Connected. Follow SCDHHS on our Facebook and X pages for regular updates. You can also [view the Medicaid Member Handbook on SCDHHS' website](#) to learn more about what is covered, where to go to ask questions and more.

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