

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Healthy Connections  
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Healthy and Connected Member Newsletter - July 2023

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.

## Submit Your Review When It's Time to Renew

Annual eligibility reviews are underway for Healthy Connections Medicaid members. Members will get an annual review form or "continuation of benefits" notice in the mail by April 1, 2024.

Visit [apply.scdhhs.gov](https://apply.scdhhs.gov) to:

- Update your contact info
- Check your annual eligibility review status
- Submit your review when it's time to renew

It is important to complete your review. If you don't think you're still eligible, your children may be eligible. Don't risk losing their coverage.

If you forgot to complete your review, there's a 90-day grace period. This means we will re-open your coverage while we review it, if you complete your form.

Finally, scammers have targeted some Medicaid members. They may ask for money or gift cards to keep your Medicaid. Do not fall for it. We are sending real texts to let members know it's time for their annual review. Our messages will never ask for money. The texts will come from (803) 879-4184. We may also call or send you a notice to request more info from you.

Report scams to the Medicaid fraud hotline at (888) 364-3224. It is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. You may also email [FraudRes@scdhhs.gov](mailto:FraudRes@scdhhs.gov).

[Learn About Annual Reviews](#)

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## Pre-applying for WIC Online



There's a new way to pre-apply online for the South Carolina Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition program. The WIC program is run by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). It provides nutrition education and healthy food for pregnant women, new mothers, babies and children under five years old.

The new [online application](#) lets families make an account to upload and update documents. This includes health data and income eligibility documents. The info can be uploaded before scheduling their WIC appointment.

After the family is approved, they get an eWIC card. It is like a debit card. The card makes it easy for families to buy WIC foods at authorized stores. Farmers' markets and farm stands across the state may accept WIC cards too.

All caregivers are encouraged to access WIC. This includes moms, dads, grandparents caring for grandchildren and foster parents.

Learn more about WIC on DHEC's [website](#).

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## Why Your Cholesterol Level is Important

Many people know it's important to watch our cholesterol levels. But what does that really mean? Cholesterol is a waxy substance in our blood that our bodies actually need to build cells and make vitamins and hormones. It circulates in our blood. But

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having too much of it in our bodies can be a problem. As the amount of cholesterol in your blood goes up, so does the risk to your health, like heart disease and stroke. That's why it's important to have your cholesterol tested, so you can know your level.

There are two types of cholesterol: LDL cholesterol which is bad and HDL which is good. Too much of the bad kind increases the risk of cholesterol slowly building up in the inner walls of your arteries that pump blood to your heart and brain.

The American Heart Association says it's important to remember to check, change and control:

- Check your cholesterol levels so you know your numbers and your risk assessment.
- Change your diet and lifestyle to help improve your levels.
- Control your cholesterol, with your doctor's help if needed.

If you're not sure when to get your levels checked, September is Cholesterol Education Month. It's a great time to talk to your doctor to find out more about what you can do to keep your levels at a healthy number. Adult South Carolina Healthy Connections Medicaid members are covered for a physical at least once every two years. Your doctor may check your cholesterol during your physical as part of your covered benefits.

Learn more about cholesterol and why it matters from the [American Heart Association](#).

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## Keeping Your Kids Healthy

Every child deserves to have a healthy start in life. One in every five children in the United States is obese. Thus, many kids have health problems due to being overweight. These conditions can include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and more.



Different things can cause weight gain. Behavior, genetics and even taking certain medicine can have an impact. But other things in society also can play a part. These

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include schools, communities, access to healthy food and access to places for exercise.

September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. This gives parents the chance to learn more about how to add exercise to your children's lifestyle. You can also encourage less screen time and healthier eating.

The United States Department of Agriculture has more than 1,000 recipes [online](#) for meal ideas. More than 800 of the recipes are made with ingredients covered by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

It's recommended kids have at least an hour of exercise each day. While that may sound like a lot, it can be spread out across the day. Use the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [website](#) to view ways to add in exercise before, during and after school and in the evening.

Remember, being an example to your kids by eating healthy and exercising can help them do the same!

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## First Five SC: Get the Support Your Child Needs

If you are expecting a new baby or raising a young child, you want the best for their future. You want them to grow up healthy, happy and with the skills they need to succeed in life. But with so many programs and services out there, it can be hard to know where to start. That's where First Five SC comes in.

First Five SC is a website that connects South Carolinians with public programs and services for children through age five. The five types of programs and services include:

1. Childcare and early education
2. Health and safety
3. Special needs and early intervention
4. Food and nutrition
5. Parenting and family support

At [first5sc.org](http://first5sc.org), you can answer a few simple questions to check your child's eligibility for more than 40 programs. You'll be able to find options for childcare assistance, preschool programs, healthcare, special needs services, food and nutrition assistance

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and parenting support. Then, with info you already entered, you can apply for multiple programs at once.

Most young children in South Carolina qualify for one or more of these programs. Many families just don't know what's available or where to find the details. First Five SC is there to provide exactly that info. It's a smart phone-friendly application that's available anytime, anywhere.

In addition to checking if you qualify for programs, the website has a "Learn" tab for teaching. Parents can read articles on different topics like choosing a childcare provider, using car seats, water safety and more.

First Five SC has partnerships in all 46 counties across the state. View the address and phone number for the partnership in each county [here](#). You may contact your local First Five SC partnership to help get connected to resources you need.

To get started, visit [first5sc.org](http://first5sc.org).

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## Tips for Breastfeeding



Did you know only one in every four infants is breastfed as recommended by the time they are six months old? Breastfeeding is one of the best things mothers can do to give their baby a strong start in life. August is National Breastfeeding Month. There are things a mother can do to provide the most nutritional milk for her baby.

Here are a few tips from the Mayo Clinic.

1. Try eating protein-rich foods like lean meat, eggs, dairy, beans and seafood low in mercury. Choose whole grain options, fruits and veggies.
  2. Drink when you are thirsty and drink more if your urine appears dark yellow. Be wary of juices, sugary drinks and caffeine.
  3. Avoid drinking alcohol. There's no level of alcohol in breast milk that's considered safe for a baby. If you drink, avoid breastfeeding until the alcohol has cleared your breast milk. Before you drink alcohol, it's a good idea to pump milk to feed your baby later.
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4. Certain foods or drinks could cause your baby to become irritable or have an allergic reaction. If your baby becomes fussy, gets a rash, diarrhea or wheezing shortly after nursing, speak with your baby's healthcare provider. If you think something you ate/drank might be affecting the baby, try to avoid it for up to a week to see if it makes a difference.

Read the full list of tips [here](#).

Many Healthy Connections Medicaid plans cover breastfeeding items like pumps. Check with [your health plan](#) to see what benefits are available.

The Medical University of South Carolina manages the Mother's Milk Bank. It has 27 locations across South Carolina. The milk bank gives pasteurized donated milk to low birth weight babies in hospitals throughout the state. Anyone interested in donating can visit the [Mother's Milk Bank of South Carolina](#) page on [musckids.org](#).

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## Knowing the Warning Signs of Suicide

Suicide is hardly ever caused by one single event or situation. Instead, it is usually multiple factors. These are called risk factors. These can increase the chance that someone could attempt suicide. September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. There are certain warning signs that someone at risk for suicide could be showing. If you are worried about someone who may be having suicidal thoughts, watch for these signs:

- Talking about being a burden
- Being isolated
- Higher anxiety
- Talking about feeling trapped or in lots of pain
- Increased substance use
- Looking for a way to access deadly weapons or drugs
- Increased anger or rage
- Extreme mood swings
- Talking about feeling hopeless
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Talking or posting about wanting to die
- Making plans for suicide

Although it can feel scary, taking action and getting someone the help they need is very important. It could prevent a suicide attempt or a death. Talk to the person calmly and openly. Offer support and encouragement.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be accessed by dialing “988.” It can be called 24/7 and provides free, confidential support to those in distress. Healthy Connections Medicaid covers a variety of behavioral health services for people with mental health challenges. Learn more about the risk factors, protective factors against suicide risk and warning signs from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

## [Warning Signs](#)

## South Carolina's Sickle Cell Registry

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is a type of blood disorder that is inherited. Normal red blood cells are smooth, round and bendable so they can flow easily through blood vessels to carry oxygen to all parts of the body. Sickle cells are stiff and sticky. They can pile up and block blood flow, keeping the healthy red blood cells from moving to where they need to go.



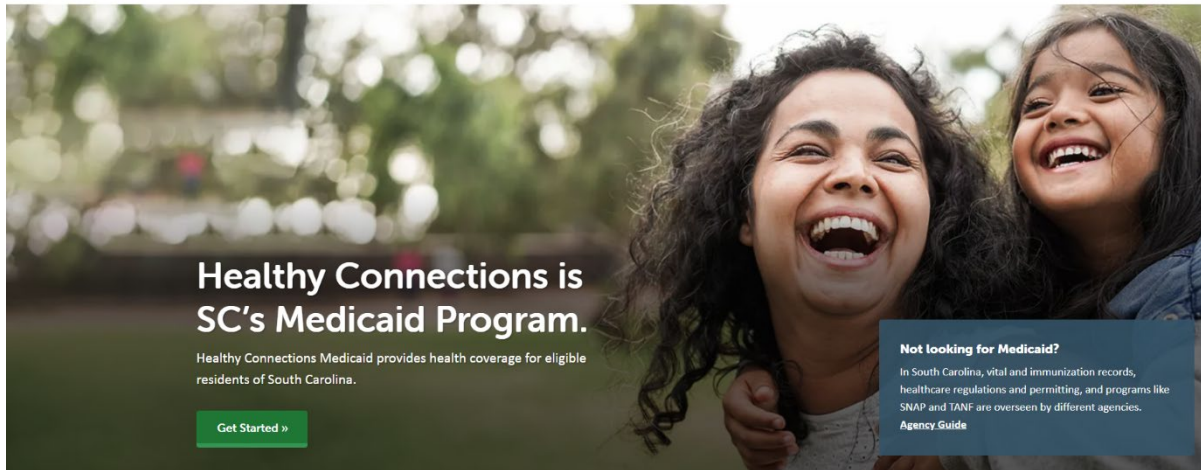
SCD affects about 100,000 people in the United States. People of African descent make up about 90% of the population with SCD in the U.S. There is no way to catch SCD, it is not contagious.

Last year, the General Assembly directed DHEC to make a Sickle Cell Volunteer Registry system for people with SCD in South Carolina. In May, DHEC officially [launched the registry](#). Those with SCD can choose if they'd like their doctor to add them to the registry. The list of people entered will help health officials better understand the population with SCD in South Carolina.

Newborn screening for SCD is a covered Healthy Connections Medicaid service. Treatment for members is also covered. September is Sickle Cell Awareness Month. Learn more about SCD from [SickleCellSpeaks.com](http://SickleCellSpeaks.com).

## SCDHHS' Redesigned Website





Have you visited SCDHHS' website lately? We have redesigned it with a new look and feel. The URL is still [www.scdhhs.gov](http://www.scdhhs.gov), but there are new features that make it easier to use.

Updates include:

- Easier navigation
- Faster load times
- Simpler ways to search the website
- Improved performance on cell phones

We have also combined dozens of web pages that used to be extensions of [scdhhs.gov](http://scdhhs.gov) to now be available through the main site.

The website will improve SCDHHS' ability to make fast updates to give Healthy Connections Medicaid members info even quicker than before. Visit [www.scdhhs.gov](http://www.scdhhs.gov) to check out all the new additions!

Thank you for reading Healthy and Connected. Follow SCDHHS on our Facebook and Twitter 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.