



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.

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## Breast Milk = The Perfect Baby Food



Did you know human milk is the perfect food for a baby? It has a combination of ingredients that help the baby's growth and development. August is National Breastfeeding Month. There are many benefits to breastfeeding for mothers and babies:

### Why is it good for babies?

1. Human milk contains antibodies made by the mother's immune system. It helps the baby develop a strong immune system and protects them from illnesses.
2. Human milk contains the best combination of ingredients for the baby. As a baby grows, the mother's milk changes to provide all nutritional requirements they need.
3. Breastfed babies have a lower risk of asthma, type 1 diabetes, obesity and sudden infant death syndrome.

### Why is it good for mothers?

1. Mothers who breastfeed have a decreased risk of breast, ovarian, endometrial and thyroid cancers.
2. It lowers the amount of excessive menstrual blood loss.
3. Breastfed babies are usually sick less often, which causes the parents to miss less work.

4. Mothers can breastfeed their babies on the go without worrying about having to mix formula or prepare bottles.

The Medical University of South Carolina manages the Mother's Milk Bank with 30 locations across the state. The milk bank provides pasteurized donated milk to hospitalized low birth weight infants across the state. Anyone interested in donating milk can visit the [Mother's Milk Bank of South Carolina page](#) on [musckids.org](http://musckids.org).

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

Learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## Breastfeeding Benefits

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## Protecting Your Family Through Vaccination

August is National Immunization Awareness Month. It's a month each year we recognize the importance of getting the vaccines we need to build immunities. An immunity helps your body fight off diseases and toxins.

As your children prepare to head back to school soon, it's a great time to make sure they get caught up on any recommended vaccines. Healthy Connections Medicaid covers vaccines for children who are enrolled in the Medicaid program. More information is available on SCDHHS' [website](#).

August is also an important time for those who are eligible to get vaccinated against COVID-19. The CDC has now approved both the Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for ages 6 months and up. Parents are encouraged to talk to their children's pediatrician about getting their kids vaccinated. Severe cases of COVID-19 can occur even in young children. Getting yourself and your children vaccinated is the best way to protect your family from COVID-19.

Visit SCDHEC's website to find a COVID-19 [vaccine location](#) near you.

Adults should also make sure they're up to date on vaccinations for themselves. Use the CDC's [adult vaccine quiz](#) to see which ones you might need.

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## New Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone, much like mental illness. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, suicide is often the result of an untreated mental health condition.

If you have thoughts of self-harm or suicide, don't be afraid to ask for help. You are not alone and there are people and resources available to support you. Healthy Connections Medicaid covers a broad array of behavioral health services for people experiencing mental health challenges.



The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) can now be accessed by dialing just "988." It is available to call 24/7 and provides free, confidential support to people in distress.

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. It's a time to educate ourselves and others about the warning signs of suicide and how to help prevent it. It also serves to encourage mental health help.

[Learn More About the Warning Signs](#)

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## Telehealth Updates

Healthy Connections Medicaid created temporary telehealth flexibilities during the COVID-19 federal public health emergency (PHE). The adjustments have made it easier for members to receive care from home. Those changes will stay in place for the full length of the federal PHE, which is now extended through Oct. 13, 2022.

Some changes, like receiving care from a doctor or nurse while staying at home, will become permanent.

Other flexibilities, including services for BabyNet-enrolled children and most behavioral health services, will extend for one year after the federal PHE ends. They will be evaluated during the year-long extension so a decision can be made for whether they will become permanent.

There are a few telehealth services that will expire at the end of the PHE. These include occupational therapy and family support services.

If you prefer receiving services via telehealth, ask your doctor or healthcare provider if it is an option for you.

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## Sickle Cell Patient Registry



September is Sickle Cell Awareness Month. Sickle cell disease (SCD) occurs in people who inherit a red blood cell disorder. There are treatment options available for those who have SCD.

A new state law allows people with SCD to be added to a patient registry. The statewide registry was created to help coordinate and improve access to care and services to help patients manage the symptoms of SCD. It is also used to collect data about the nature of SCD in South Carolina, which can serve to educate doctors on ways to best-help patients suffering from the disease.

Being added to the Sickle Cell Disease Voluntary Registry is up to the patient. When diagnosed with SCD, the patient's doctor can add them to the registry, if the patient chooses. No one is required to join the registry, and those who do may opt out at any time.

Newborn screening for SCD is covered by Healthy Connections Medicaid. Treatment is covered for Medicaid members. Learn more about the disease from the Office of Minority Health:

[Sickle Cell Awareness](#)

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## Taking a Look at Our Eyes

We use our eyes from the moment we wake up to the time we go to bed. Sometimes it's easy to forget how important it is to make sure our vision is at its best and our eyes are healthy. August is Children's Eye Health and Safety Month. Scheduling an eye exam for your children is one of the best things you can do for their eye health.



Children and youth in South Carolina will be able to receive an eye exam at some schools next school year, thanks to [a new state law](#). Mobile units with a licensed eye doctor will be able to travel to [Title 1 schools](#) to provide students with free eye exams. If a parent or guardian gives their permission, the child will have the exam and be given an information sheet with results. Additional details will be on the sheet if the child is given a prescription for glasses or diagnosed with any other eye needs.

In addition, one free eye exam and a pair of glasses per year are covered for Healthy Connections Medicaid members younger than 21 years of age. Adult members are entitled to one eye exam per year and a pair of glasses following some types of eye surgery. Read more about Healthy Connections Medicaid vision services [here](#).

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## Did you Know Medicaid Covers Hepatitis Treatment?

A group of diseases called hepatitis affect millions of people across the world. Hepatitis is a swelling of the liver, usually caused by a viral infection. The three most common hepatitis types in the United States are referred to as types A, B and C. July 28 is World Hepatitis Day, a time to increase our awareness of the disease. Learn about the details of each type from the CDC:

- **Hepatitis A** is a contagious liver infection. People who get this disease could feel sick for a few weeks to several months. They usually recover completely and have no lasting liver damage. This form of hepatitis is easily prevented with a vaccine, recommended for one-year-old children and adults who may be at risk.
- **Hepatitis B** is a disease that can cause chronic or lifelong infection. There is no cure for this type of hepatitis, but treatments are available that can delay or reduce the risk of

developing liver cancer. Hepatitis B can be prevented with a vaccine. The CDC recommends adults through age 59 and those over 60 with risk factors get vaccinated.

- **Hepatitis C** is a liver infection that can be short-term, but for more than half who are infected, it becomes long-term. Many with this type of hepatitis show no symptoms. The only way to know if you're infected is through testing. The CDC recommends all adults get tested at least once in their life for hepatitis C. Although there is no vaccine for this type, treatments are available that can cure most people in just eight to 12 weeks.

Healthy Connections Medicaid covers treatment for all three types of hepatitis.

Learn more about World Hepatitis Day [here](#).

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## Staying Safe in the Water



Getting in the water to beat the summer heat is a popular activity for kids and adults. Whether you're in a pool, lake, river or ocean, there are many ways to have fun with your friends and family while staying safe. Even if you're an experienced swimmer, you should still remember these important water safety tips from the American Red Cross:

- Use the buddy system – don't swim alone. Stay with at least one other person, even if you're at a familiar place.
- Wear a life jacket when in open water, boating, waterskiing or doing other water sports.
- Provide close and constant attention to children in your care while near or in the water.
- Make sure everyone in your family knows how to swim.
- Know what to do in a water emergency.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs before or while swimming.

Learn more about water safety and what to do in an emergency on the American Red Cross [website](#).

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## Discounted Internet Access Program

Healthy Connections Medicaid members may be eligible for a new program that provides access to internet. The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a federal program that helps families pay for internet service and devices like a laptop or tablet.

If your household is eligible, you could receive:

- Up to a \$30 discount per month on internet service
- Up to a \$75 discount per month if your household is on qualifying tribal lands
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet or desktop computer
- A low-cost service plan that may be fully covered by the ACP

If your family qualifies, you can apply online, by mail or by contacting your current internet company. Search [here](#) to see what providers offer the ACP in your area.

Learn more about the program at [affordableconnectivity.gov](https://affordableconnectivity.gov).

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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 [here on SCDHHS' website](#) to learn more about what is covered, where to go to ask questions and more.