

# WHOLE you



Winter 2025

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## A Fresh Start to Your Health

*As we begin 2026, new opportunities are available to focus on your health and well-being.*

This edition of Whole You highlights resources and information to support your overall health such as insights on how dental health affects overall wellness and information on high blood pressure and prostate cancer. Page 8 features the Nourish to Flourish section, with winter wellness tips and a cozy hot chocolate recipe.

This issue also includes an important reminder about renewing Medicaid coverage. Renewal is the yearly review needed to keep your Medicaid benefits. When it's time to renew, you will receive a Healthy Connections Annual Review Form from the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) with instructions on what to do next. For more information, visit [scdhhs.gov](http://scdhhs.gov) or see the next page.

And be sure to look at the events calendar on page 9 so you can keep up on all things happening in your area. Did you miss our last issue? Take a look [here](#).

I really hope you enjoy this latest edition and that it helps you take care of the whole you.

*Medicaid Renewal is the yearly review to keep your Medicaid benefits. See page 2 for details.*

# Renew Your South Carolina Medicaid Benefits

## Check your mail.

When it is time to renew, members will receive a Healthy Connections Annual Review Form by mail. The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) uses this form to determine continued Medicaid eligibility.

## Complete and Return the Form

Medicaid coverage is reviewed each year to help ensure continued benefits. Taking a few simple steps can help keep coverage in place.

**The Annual Review Form should be completed and returned to SCDHHS as instructed.**

**Members can submit the form using one of the options below:**

- Complete an online form at [Apply.scdhhs.gov](https://Apply.scdhhs.gov).
- Upload documents using the **Document Upload Tool** at [Apply.scdhhs.gov](https://Apply.scdhhs.gov).
- Email the form to **888-820-1204**.
- Deliver the form to the [local county Medicaid office](#).
- Mail the form to:  
SCDHHS Central Mail  
P.O. Box 100101  
Columbia, SC 29202-3101



**Need more  
information?**

Visit [scdhhs.gov](https://scdhhs.gov) to learn more about Medicaid eligibility and renewal requirements.

# Start the year strong — use your coverage to stay healthy.

*Taking a few simple steps now can help you stay on track, avoid delays in care, and make the most of the services available to you throughout the year.*

## Schedule preventive checkups.

Preventive visits help catch health concerns early, often before symptoms appear. These visits may include annual checkups, screenings, and routine lab work based on your age and health needs. Scheduling appointments early in the year can make it easier to find a time that works for you.

## Review your covered benefits.

Your Medicaid plan covers a range of services designed to support your health. Reviewing your benefits can help you understand what services are available to you and how to access them, including preventive care, prescriptions, and wellness programs.

## Keep your health information organized.

Having a current list of your medications and providers can help you stay prepared for appointments. Keep medication names, dosages, and provider contact information in one place for easy reference.



## Know where to go for care.

Knowing where to seek care can save time and reduce stress. Primary care is best for routine visits and ongoing care. Urgent care can help with non-emergency needs when your primary care provider is unavailable. The emergency room should be used for serious or life-threatening situations.

## Take the next step.

To learn more about your Medicaid benefits, find a provider or get help with your coverage, visit [absolutetotalcare.com](https://absolutetotalcare.com).



## A healthy smile means a healthy you.

### ***Taking care of your teeth does more than give you a great smile.***

Of course, it can keep you from getting bad breath, gum disease and tooth decay. But did you know taking care of your teeth can affect the health of your whole body? When your mouth isn't healthy, it can increase your risk for stroke and heart disease.

The good news — brushing your teeth is one of the best and easiest ways to keep your mouth healthy. Brush your teeth twice a day and get all sides of your teeth and your tongue. This will get rid of germs and leftover food. Use a toothbrush with soft bristles. Brush for two minutes each time, using gentle, circular strokes.

To keep your toothbrush clean, don't lay it on a sink counter or in a closed space where germs can grow. Keep it in a toothbrush holder or small jar or vase. Get a new toothbrush every three to four months and right away after you have been sick.

Flossing is an important step too. It helps clean between your teeth, where cavities usually start. Slide the floss between your teeth and gently move it between each tooth all the way to your gum line.

Regular visits to your dentist will include an exam and cleaning to get rid of plaque that can build up in any spaces you miss when brushing and flossing. Your dentist will check for any tooth decay and gum disease as well as signs of other health issues like vitamin deficiencies and even diabetes. And they'll make sure any dental work is still holding up and doing its job.

Certain foods and drinks are great for your teeth — others are not so great. Drinking water is great. It washes away food and germs during the day. Foods that have lots of calcium and protein are also good choices — like carrots, almonds, and cheese. On the other hand, chewy, sticky, sugary foods and sweet drinks can damage the enamel surface of your teeth. They can cause decay, so avoid them when you can, and when you can't, rinse your mouth with water or brush your teeth. If you chew gum, choose sugar free.



## Fight America's #1 killer — high blood pressure.

Sometimes you hear it called “the silent killer.” Sometimes you hear it called “hypertension.” Whatever it’s called, if you have high blood pressure, you may not feel it. But it can quietly harm your blood vessels and cause dangerous health problems. There is no cure for high blood pressure, but your doctor can give you medicine to help it, and you can also make changes in your life that lower your risk for the things high blood pressure can cause, including heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.



### *Here are six things you can do to fight high blood pressure:*

#### **1 GET YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE CHECKED AND LEARN WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN.**

If your doctor says you have high blood pressure, you can check it yourself on a regular basis. That way you can know if any changes you make in your health habits are working.

#### **2 LOSE WEIGHT IF YOU NEED TO.**

Being overweight can increase your risk, so talk with your doctor about ways to get to a healthy weight.

#### **3 GET EXERCISE.**

Try for 30 minutes every day. It can be something as simple as a bicycle ride or a brisk walk. Talk to your doctor about developing an exercise program.

#### **4 DO NOT SMOKE.**

If you smoke and it’s hard to quit, your doctor can help you.

#### **5 LIMIT ALCOHOL.**

Men should have no more than two drinks per day, and women should have no more than one drink per day.

#### **6 SLEEP WELL.**

Getting enough sleep is important for your health overall. If you often get too little sleep, it can raise your risk for high blood pressure.

## Write on!

### Try journaling.

Sometimes, the busy season or gray skies can make us feel stressed or down. Journaling can be a wonderful way to feel back in control, have a sense of thankfulness, and put any problems or concerns in perspective. You can do this using any notebook, diary or paper, and it doesn't have to take long. Just ten minutes can make a difference. Yet for many people, writing can feel like it's hard to know where to start. Use these ideas to help you get started.

- Write a letter to your teenage self.
- List your goals for this week, month, or year. Do they match the goals of what you want to do with your life?
- What is on your bucket list? List the things you want to do in the next five years.
- What makes you unique?



- Make a list of 10 things you are grateful for today.
- What was the happiest moment of your life? Write down where you were, what you did, and who was there. Write as many details as you can remember.
- How is your day or week going so far? Write down any good or bad things that happened, how you feel about them, and if you learned something new.
- How are you different from the person you were five years ago?
- How do you trust yourself to make big decisions?
- What are some of the important lessons you have learned in your life?

These are just a few ideas of things you can write and think about. The more you write, the easier it will get, and the more ideas will come your way. Just remember, you're important, and it is important to spend time reflecting on your life and what matters to you.

# Prostate cancer awareness.

## A Closer Look at Prostate Health

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer found in men in America. Each year, about 1 in 9 men will find out they have prostate cancer.

Your risk of getting prostate cancer grows with age. But it doesn't just happen to older men. Black men are more likely to get prostate cancer. Men who have a brother or father with prostate cancer are also more likely to get the disease.

A PSA test is a way doctors can test for prostate cancer and find it early. If you're 50 or older, talk to your doctor about getting the test. And if you are Black or have a close family member with prostate cancer, do it at age 45.

Healthy food choices might lower your risk for prostate cancer.

- 1. Choose low-fat meats.** Avoid fatty meats like beef, bacon, and sausage. When you can, choose lower-fat meats like chicken or fish. You can also choose veggie burgers.
- 2. Eat lots of broccoli.** Choose vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, turnips, and kale. These have vitamins C, E and K, and can help curb cancer.
- 3. Enjoy omega-3s.** Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids can lower your risk of prostate cancer. These include salmon, tuna, mackerel, flaxseed, chia seeds, and leafy dark green vegetables.
- 4. Spotlight on tomatoes.** Tomatoes can help fight prostate cancer and other forms of cancer.



Put tomato slices on your sandwich or in your salad. You can also drink tomato juice when you're thirsty or add salsa on top of your favorite foods. You can also have pasta with tomato-based sauce or a bowl of tomato soup.

**5. Have a cup of green tea.** The leaves that make green tea can also help reduce prostate cancer risk. A cup of green tea can also do other good things, like lower stress and blood pressure and protect against heart disease. When you drink tea, make sure to keep the sugar at a minimum.



**Nourish to Flourish**

## Simple ways to care for yourself this winter



*If a winter day is cold and gray, use this fun recipe to warm things up.*

### Easy Hot Chocolate

**What you need:** milk, sugar, chocolate chips, marshmallows, whipped cream

1. Pour milk into a mug, leaving space at the top.
2. Add sugar and chocolate chips and stir.
3. Microwave for 1 minute, stir, then microwave for 1 more minute.
4. Top with whipped cream and marshmallows. Enjoy!

Chilly weather can make it harder to stay energized and hydrated. This season focuses on warm meals, steady hydration, and small daily habits that help support your overall well-being.

### Winter Wellness Tips:

- 1 Choose warm foods like soups, stews, and oatmeal to help you feel satisfied and fueled.
- 2 Do not forget to drink water even when you are not feeling thirsty.
- 3 Add seasonal fruits and vegetables such as citrus, sweet potatoes, and leafy greens to your meals.
- 4 Keep a consistent meal routine to support steady energy throughout the day.



### Did You Know?

Eating breakfast can improve focus by up to 20% throughout the day.



## Community Spotlight!

### Honoring Grandparents Who Step Up

Hosted by Dawn Staley in partnership with Absolute Total Care, the annual Grandparents Breakfast recognizes grandparents who are raising their grandchildren and the vital role they play in their families. The event brings the community together to acknowledge their dedication while connecting attendees with local leaders and support resources.



Grandparents listen attentively during the program while enjoying breakfast and connecting with fellow attendees.



Dawn Staley and Judy Gaston share a moment together at the event, highlighting the partnership and leadership that help make the annual Grandparents Breakfast possible.



### Event Recap

Each year, Dawn Staley hosts the Grandparents Breakfast to recognize grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. Held in partnership with Absolute Total Care, the event brings grandparents together for a morning of connection and community.

The program includes remarks from Dawn Staley and community leaders, along with opportunities to engage with local partners and learn about available support resources.

### Need help finding an event?

Absolute Total Care Member Services can help members find events and resources in their community. Visit: [www.absolutetotalcare.com](http://www.absolutetotalcare.com)

Join us in the community!



## Community Events Calendar

Connect with us at our upcoming community events this year. Learn more about your health plan benefits, access helpful resources, and meet our team in your area.

### Need help finding an event?

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1

**Rubye H. Jones  
Head Start  
Parent Meeting**  
40 John McCarroll  
Greenville, SC  
1pm - 1:30pm  
Feb. 26, 2026

Stop by the Absolute Total Care table during the parent meeting to learn more about the health plan. Marketing materials will be available.

2

**Minni Hughes  
Elementary  
Parent Expo**  
8548 Willtown Rd.  
Yonges Island, SC  
9am - 11pm  
Feb. 28, 2026

Visit the Absolute Total Care table to learn about Medicaid and ATC benefits. Food provided.

3

**Beta Pi Zeta  
Chapter City Wide  
Baby Shower**  
35 Council St.  
Sumter, SC  
10am - 1pm  
Feb. 28, 2026

Community Baby Shower with giveaways and educational information.

 Questions? Call us at 1-866-433-6041 (TTY: 711).

 All events are open to members and the community.

***Community events can help members stay active, learn new skills, and connect with local resources.***