



# healthy**NOW**

FALL 2008

## DO I NEED TO Make an Appointment?

**M**ost doctors' offices are not set up for people to just walk in without an appointment.

They work by appointment only to maximize the medical staff's time and make sure they have enough time with each patient.

Some doctors' offices and clinics and all urgent care centers will see you without an appointment. It is better to make an appointment with your doctor, but if you do go somewhere that accepts walk-ins, be patient. The staff may have a lot of patients, so you may have a longer than normal wait time. However, if your wait time exceeds 45 minutes from the time you checked into the office, call Member Services at **888.276.2020** to discuss your concerns with a representative. ■

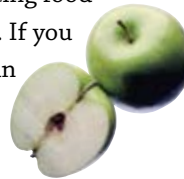


## Lose Weight AND Feel Better

**D**id you know that more than half of the people living in South Carolina are overweight? That means a lot of people would feel better and live longer if they could lose weight and keep it off.

So how can you lose that extra weight? It's all about balancing food intake and physical activity. If you eat more calories (food) than you burn, you will store the extra calories as fat. That means that if you eat fewer calories than you burn, you will use up some of your stored fat and lose weight. You need to eat less and exercise more to lose weight.

There are lots of small changes you can make during a day that will add up to big changes over time.



- **Cut down on sweet drinks like sodas, sweet tea and fruit drinks.** If you cut out one 12-ounce can of regular soda a day, you would lose 15 pounds in a year (without making any other changes).
- **Cut down on portion sizes.** Try to use a smaller plate and avoid "supersizing" your meals.
- **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Fruits and vegetables are low in calories and provide lots of good nutrients.
- **Eat more healthy meals at home.** Make meals at home instead of eating fast food.
- **Exercise more.** Go for a walk at lunchtime or walk the kids to the park to play. ■





## LEARN TO CONTROL Your Asthma

**W**ould you like to have better control of your asthma? Would you like to know how to better manage your asthma symptoms? Would you like to know which asthma medicines to take and when to take them?

### An Asthma Action Plan Can Help

An asthma action plan is a written plan completed by your doctor that helps you better control your asthma. This plan can be based on your symptoms or your peak-flow meter readings. It will tell you which asthma medicines you should take depending on how you feel or what your peak-flow readings are. The plan is divided into three color zones. The following is a sample:

<b>Green Zone</b>
Your breathing is good. You are not coughing or wheezing. Continue your daily controller medicines like Flovent, Pulmicort, Advair or Singulair.
<b>Yellow Zone</b>
You are beginning to cough, wheeze, become short of breath or feel your chest getting tight. You may have been exposed to one of your triggers or have cold symptoms. Continue your daily medicines but also take other medicines to keep from getting worse. These are rescue medicines, including Albuterol, Proventil or Ventolin. Take these by nebulizer or inhaler.
<b>Red Zone</b>
The rescue medicines are not working. Your heart rate is getting faster and you find it hard to walk and talk. Call your doctor NOW. If you can't reach your doctor, go to the closest emergency room or call <b>911</b> or your local emergency number.

Post your asthma action plan in your home, and give copies to people who can help you or your child. Remember, asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. Your asthma action plan is a great tool. Ask your doctor for one today. ■

## KEEP YOUR **Medical Benefits**

**A**s a Medicaid recipient and member of First Choice, you should know that every year you must prove that you are still eligible for Medicaid through South Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS). About 60 days before your annual review date, SCDHHS will send you a review form to complete. If the form is returned late or incomplete or not returned at all, you could lose your Medicaid and your healthcare benefits. Return the form even if you don't think you still qualify.

At First Choice, we want you and your family to stay healthy, which means keeping your Medicaid and healthcare benefits. We will mail you reminders about completing your review form, and we have staff trained to help you. It also is important to let First Choice and Medicaid know of changes to your address or phone number. If you have questions about your annual review or if you have moved or changed your phone number, please call us at **888.276.2020**. ■

## STOP **Medicaid Fraud** AND **Abuse**

**M**edicaid loses millions of dollars each year because of fraud and abuse. **Fraud** is when a person steals or scams the Medicaid system such as, a person ends up with additional earnings that were not reported to the Medicaid office. **Abuse** is when a person does not follow the rules. This causes money to be unnecessarily wasted. Select Health has a committee to help detect fraud and abuse. The committee looks at things like payments to doctors for their services, doctors' bills for seeing members and members' use of the First Choice card.

If you think someone is abusing the Medicaid system, call one of the following: Select Health of South Carolina at **569.1759** or Corporate and Special Investigations Unit at **866.833.9718**. ■



# Get the Conversation Started

BEFORE YOUR NEXT VISIT



## The relationship with your doctor is a very personal one.

You must be able to tell your doctor about your health problems, including symptoms. Talking openly can help you and your doctor make better choices about your health.

Always identify your needs before telling your doctor. Here are some tips to help you get ready for your next appointment:

1. Prepare questions for your doctor and write them down.
2. Make a list of all the medicines you are taking (including vitamins and herbs) and the amount. Include any medication allergies you have.
3. Keep a record of new symptoms you are experiencing.
4. Be familiar with your medical history and health problems that run in your family.

5. Make a list of other doctors you are seeing.
6. Share the results from any recent medical tests.
7. Be prepared to explain to your doctor your personal, cultural and religious preferences and beliefs that may affect your medical decisions.
8. Bring your insurance information.
9. Bring a notebook, tape recorder or friend or family member to help you remember your doctor's instructions afterward.
10. If you need an interpreter, don't forget to ask for one!

Doctors can be very busy, so you need to know how to get the most out of your visit. When in doubt, always ask questions. It is your right as a patient. ■

## Healthy Hoops® — A PROGRAM FOR KIDS WITH ASTHMA

Did you know that nearly 9 percent of kids in South Carolina suffer from asthma? That's why First Choice has the Healthy Hoops® program. It uses basketball to teach kids with asthma and their families how to manage the illness. Here are a few fun facts about Healthy Hoops®:

- First Choice brought the program to South Carolina in 2005.
- Last year, Healthy Hoops® expanded to Charleston. Now, First Choice hosts events each year in Columbia, Greenville and Charleston.
- Healthy Hoops® Challenge events feature celebrity coaches including Clemson's Oliver Purnell and College of Charleston's Bobby Cremins.
- Healthy Hoops® has touched the lives of more than 2,000 families in South Carolina, including 635 children with asthma.
- This year, First Choice is kicking off the Healthy Hoops® Club which offers more fun activities for kids with asthma. ■



For more information or to register for an event, please call the Healthy Hoops® hotline at **866.HOOPS.SC.**



### Upcoming Healthy Hoops® Events

October 4	Midlands Challenge
October 18	Upstate Fest
November 1	Charleston Fest

## FREE Health Plan **FirstChoice Kids**

First Choice Kids is a free health plan offered by Select Health as part of the new Healthy Connections Kids program. First Choice Kids is for children whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford private health insurance. If you lose your Medicaid eligibility, First Choice Kids might be an option for your family.

First Choice Kids covers:

- Doctor visits
- Well-child visits
- Immunizations
- Emergency care
- Labs and X-rays
- Vision care
- Dental care (provided through Medicaid)
- Inpatient and outpatient hospital visits

First Choice Kids also offers many more free benefits. There are no copayments or deductibles. Children may qualify if they:

- Are younger than 19 years old
- Don't have comprehensive health coverage
- Have been uninsured for three months, unless their health coverage was involuntarily dropped
- Are legal U.S. citizens and residents of South Carolina
- Have a Social Security card, or if the family agrees to apply for the card
- Have family with \$30,000 or less in the bank
- Are eligible based on family income ■

For more information about First Choice Kids, call **866.299.9594.**

## True? False?

Every woman has some risk of getting breast cancer.



**True.** About 80 percent of women who get breast cancer do not have family histories of the disease. Increasing age is the biggest single risk factor for breast cancer. For those women who do have a family history of breast cancer, your risk may be higher than normal. Discuss your family history with your doctor, so you know your level of risk. Mammography is still the best method to detect breast cancer early. If you are age 40 or older, get screened every one to two years. If you are younger than 40 years and have a history of breast cancer in your family, talk with your doctor about exams. ■

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## Staying Healthy WITH DIABETES

**D**ibetes is often called a “silent disease.” People with diabetes can feel fine on the outside, but on the inside, the diabetes is damaging their organs and other systems.

Regular testing is important to catch damage early. First Choice and the American Diabetes Association suggest people with diabetes have the following tests:

1. **Hemoglobin A1c Test: every three to six months.** This test measures your average blood sugar level over the past three months. The goal for most people with diabetes is around 7. Your doctor will decide on a goal that is best for you.
2. **Lipid Profile: at least once a year.** This blood test measures your “bad” cholesterol (LDL) and “good” cholesterol (HDL) levels. Bad cholesterol can build up and clog your blood vessels and cause a heart attack or stroke.
3. **Microalbumin Test: once a year.** This urine test checks for a protein in your urine, which is an early sign of kidney damage.
4. **Dilated Retinal Eye Exam: once a year—even if your vision seems fine.** The doctor needs to dilate your eyes to check for early damage to your retina. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in adults.
5. **Foot Exam: daily.** Examine feet for blisters, bruises, swelling or redness. If you cannot see your feet, use a mirror or ask a family member to help you. Your doctor should check your feet at each visit.
6. **Blood Pressure: at each doctor’s visit.** It is best to keep your blood pressure below 130/80 mm Hg. ■



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