



# HEALTH MATTERS

Spring/Summer 2026

## Five tips for keeping your heart healthy

The heart is your body's powerhouse and needs a lifetime of care. Follow these five tips to help keep it healthy.

### 1. Keep a healthy weight

Keeping a healthy weight reduces strain on your heart and lowers your risk of conditions like type-2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers.

### 2. Eat healthy


Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats can improve your heart health. Avoid foods with lots of sugar, saturated fats and sodium (salt).

### 3. Exercise regularly

Get about 30 minutes of exercise like walking, biking or swimming

4 to 5 times a week. This helps keep your heart and mind strong. Add in strength training like weightlifting and yoga twice per week. Always talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

**WATCH:**  
Check out our heart-health video series for more tips



Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies. Fill one quarter of your plate with whole grains. And fill one quarter of your plate with low-fat protein. Limit foods that are high in sugar.

## Heart story continued

### 4. Don't smoke tobacco or vape

Smoking and vaping damage the heart, leading to high blood pressure and constricted blood vessels which block blood flow in the body. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your heart.

### 5. Control high blood pressure

High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is a condition where the force of blood against the artery walls is too high. According to the American Heart Association, lack of sleep for children can lead to high blood pressure and obesity. **Read more to find out how much sleep a child needs.**

Talk to your doctor about treatment plans for staying heart-healthy. Special programs may help you be successful in managing heart health issues. Contact Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services to find out about Care Management and other heart health wellness programs.



## Integrated care: What to know

Integrated care means that a member needs only one health plan to get care for their body and mind. Mercy Care DCS CHP members can get their physical and behavioral health services from us.

We offer integrated health services to all our members.

We are committed to providing our members with more options to get physical and behavioral health care and wellness services. We make accessing care easy for members with complex care needs.

If you have any questions or need services, you can call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services at **1-602-212-4983** or **1-833-711-0776 (TTY/TDD 711)**.



## Medicare Part D

# Prescription drug benefits for dual-eligible members

People who are eligible and enrolled in both Medicaid and Medicare are considered “dual-eligible” members. Once you are Medicare eligible, your Medicaid plan can no longer pay for your drugs. Dual-eligible people need to enroll in a Medicare plan that includes Part D drug coverage.

Medicare Advantage plans include coverage for Medicare-covered services, Part D prescription drugs and other benefits not covered by Medicare.

Some Medicare Advantage plans are special needs plans (SNPs). These plans include coverage for Medicare-covered services, Part D prescription drugs and additional benefits. And they will coordinate with the Medicaid plan coverage a dual eligible member has.

Mercy Care offers a Dual-Eligible Special Needs Plan (D-SNP) called Mercy Care Advantage. It includes Part D drug coverage. If you qualify for the ALTCS E-PD Medicaid program, live in a long-term care facility (like a nursing home) or get home- and community-based services, you pay \$0 for covered drugs. With Part D coverage, you will pay a small amount for covered drugs.

If you don't join a Medicare plan that includes Part D drug coverage, Medicare will automatically enroll you in a stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plan. People who are dual eligible can switch Medicare plans during certain times of the year.

*Note: AHCCCS does not contract nor oversee the activities of any separate stand-alone Medicare Part D prescription drug plans.*

# Well-child visits help keep kids healthy

Everyone needs to have regular visits with their doctor, including kids. For DCS CHP members, Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) is a complete health program. EPSDT includes a well-child visit and ensures youth receive all required physical and behavioral health services.

## What does a well-child visit include?

Their provider will:

- Examine them (they'll wear underwear or a gown to protect their modesty)
- Check to make sure they are up to date on their immunizations (shots)
- Check their hearing, vision, gums and teeth
- Ask about any personal or family history of health problems
- Check their height, weight



and Body Mass Index or BMI (to measure body fat)

- Assess their nutrition and talk about healthy eating
- Check how well they are growing and developing compared to most kids their age
- Perform a behavioral health screening
- Discuss topics like tobacco, alcohol and drug use
- Check their blood pressure
- Order blood tests for anemia and other screenings
- Run additional tests, if needed

## Why are well-child visits important?

Well-child visits allow doctors and nurses to have regular contact with the child. That way, they can keep track of their overall health and development.

They're also required by law. Children in foster care need a well-child medical exam within 30 days of entry into foster care. Rapid Response will assess the physical and mental health needs of the child within the first 72 hours of entry into foster care, per Jacob's Law. Most children in foster care will be enrolled with a mental health service provider.

You can make an appointment now for the child's yearly checkup. Call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services at **602-212-4983 (TTY: 711)** or **1-833-711-0776 (TTY: 711)** for help. We can also help you get rides to medical appointments. For all emergencies, dial **911**.



## Know the risks of vaping and tobacco

Vaping is a form of smoking that provides nicotine, marijuana or other chemicals through inhaling “vapor,” a cloudy mist. Vaping is popular with teens and young adults. Vaping devices can be easy to hide because they look like USB drives, pens or other everyday items. (Some look like cigarettes or pipes.) Young people enjoy the taste of the flavorings added to vaping devices, known as “e-juice” or “e-liquid.” Many also view vaping as safer than cigarettes. But vaping has many risks of its own.

### Nicotine and addiction

Many vaping devices such contain high levels of nicotine, the addictive chemical found in tobacco.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, young people who vape are more likely to start smoking cigarettes later. Smoking cigarettes can cause cancer and other health problems.

Vaping has several other risks according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Some young people do not know that vaping products contain nicotine.
- Nicotine can harm how young people’s brains develop.
- Nicotine fuels the pleasure and reward parts of the brain, which can lead to addiction.

- Using nicotine may also lead to future addiction to other drugs.

### Vaping and lung disease

In 2019, thousands of people got very sick and a few dozen died from a vaping-related lung disease. Many of the affected people used vaping products from family, friends or online sources that contained THC and vitamin E acetate. These chemicals were linked to the vaping lung disease.

### Get help to quit

Programs are available to help teens and young adults quit vaping and/or tobacco products.

The N-O-T: Not On Tobacco program was created by the American Lung Association. It’s designed to help people ages 14 to 19 quit smoking tobacco products and/or vaping. Visit [lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/not-on-tobacco](https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/helping-teens-quit/not-on-tobacco) for details. Smoking deterrants such as nicotine gums and patches are also covered for members.

### Prevention

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned the sale of e-cigarettes (a type of vaping device) to anyone under 21. They also launched “The Real Cost,” a campaign to bring tobacco and vaping use prevention and education for youth to the public. Visit [fda.gov/tobacco-products/public-health-education-campaigns/real-cost-campaign](https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/public-health-education-campaigns/real-cost-campaign) for more info.

# Learn about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevention

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are common and on the rise in Arizona.

According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, almost 56,000 cases were reported in 2020, and cases have tripled since 2000. Young adults ages 15 to 24 are most at risk of getting an STI.

Talk openly with the child in your care about safe sex. A few moments of unsafe sexual practices can result in long-lasting effects on their lives.

STIs are spread by having oral, anal or vaginal sex with an infected person. STIs do not always show symptoms. For anyone who is sexually active, the best way to know if they have an STI is to get tested regularly.

## STIs and pregnancy

Experts recommend getting tested for HIV and other STIs at the first prenatal visit. STIs can be transmitted to the baby and can put a pregnant woman and her baby at serious risk if left untreated.

## How to prevent STIs

- The only way to guarantee avoiding STIs is to not have sex (practice abstinence).
- Using condoms the correct way can prevent STIs and unintended pregnancy. Male and female condoms are covered for members.
- Limiting the number of sexual partners and asking them to get tested for STIs prior to sex can help prevent STIs.

Mercy Care DCS CHP covers testing and treatment for STIs. Make an appointment with the child's Primary Care Provider (PCP).

## Types of STIs

**Chlamydia** is one of the most common STIs. Symptoms may include abnormal discharge from the vagina or penis and a burning sensation when peeing. You can also get chlamydia in the rectum from anal sex. This can cause rectal pain, discharge and bleeding. In women, untreated chlamydia can make it difficult to get pregnant or cause problems during pregnancy. It can also be passed to their baby during delivery. Chlamydia can be treated and cured with antibiotics, but repeat infections are common.

**Syphilis** can cause permanent damage to nerves, vision and/or hearing. And it can be passed on to a baby during pregnancy. There is currently an outbreak of syphilis in Arizona. Symptoms include sores on the penis, vagina, anus, rectum, lips or mouth. Rashes on the hands and feet may appear as well. Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics.

**Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** is the virus that causes AIDS. It attacks the immune system and can be fatal if left untreated. Having any STI raises your risk of HIV. Sores from STIs make it easier for HIV to enter the body. And HIV can be spread through the same unsafe practices that cause other STIs. There is no cure for HIV, but treatments can keep it controlled. HIV can be transmitted from a pregnant person to their baby, so it's important to get proper treatment.

**Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)** is a leading cause of cervical cancer. Most people have been infected with HPV but may not know it. The virus usually has no symptoms. You can protect yourself with the HPV vaccine. This vaccine is covered and recommended for members 11 to 45 years of old. Children can get the vaccine as early as 9 years old. It's best to get the vaccine before you are sexually active.

# Peer and family supports lend a helping hand

Peer support and family support specialists are specially trained behavioral health providers who deliver supportive services to AHCCCS members, family members and caregivers. **View the list of peer and family support providers.**



## Peer support for youth and young adults

Young adults who have aged out of foster care may access peer support services if they are enrolled with AHCCCS and experiencing behavioral health challenges.

Peer support services help people:

- Connect to resources in the community
- Develop tools to use in times of crisis
- Create treatment and wellness plans
- Advocate for themselves when working with a treatment team

The Recovery Empowerment Network's H.E.R.O Discovery Center provides peer support and other services to people ages 18 to 25. They also host Teen Connections Night for youth ages 14 to 17. Visit [renaz.org](http://renaz.org) for information. Or call **1-602-248-0368**.

## Family support

Family support specialists educate and guide people through the behavioral health system. They can help parents and caregivers find housing, food, employment, respite services and parenting classes. They may also provide services for children, such as help with school and life-skills training. Visit the **Family Involvement Center website** for more info.

## Children in foster care

Peer support services are available to children in foster care to address behavioral health needs. Parents and caregivers should ask their behavioral health provider about peer support

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## Peer story continued

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services for children. **MIKID** and **Reach Family Services** offer peer support services and mentoring for youth. Support will also come to them from members of the Child and Family Team (CFT).

The CFT includes the child, their caregiver, DCS Specialist, a behavioral health representative and any key person in the child's life who is invited to participate.

If a child in foster care is in a behavioral health crisis, call the Crisis Response Network Foster Care Line at **1-602-633-0763**.

## Caregiver support

Who is caring for people who care for others? Caregivers such as biological, foster and kinship parents may need help dealing with difficult emotions and stressors. Caregivers may contact their behavioral health provider and ask about mental health supports.

**Mental Health America** also has tools and resources to help caregivers.

Peers and families play an important role in helping members be as healthy as possible. That is why Mercy Care DCS CHP works with the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition, an organization of peer and family member advocates.

The coalition makes sure individuals and families have a say in behavioral health policy decisions that affect their community. To get involved or learn more about peer and family support resources, email the Office of Individual and Family Affairs at **OIFATeam@mercycaresaz.org**.

## Help for a behavioral health crisis

Mercy Care DCS CHP members can call the **Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Line** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call **1-844-534-HOPE (4673)** or text HOPE to **4HOPE (44673)**. Chat support is available at **crisis.solari-inc.org/start-a-chat**.

The Crisis Line staff can help:

- Provide crisis support over the phone
- Dispatch a crisis mobile team to support you
- Arrange transportation to take you somewhere safe
- Help you arrange counseling or a connection to your outpatient provider
- Provide options for dealing with urgent situations
- If you feel unsafe at home

### Tribal crisis lines:

- San Carlos Apache Reservation: **1-866-495-6735**
- Gila River and Ak-Chin Indian Communities: **1-800-259-3449**
- Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community: **480-850-9230**
- Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: **480-461-8888**
- San Lucy District of the Tohono O'odham Nation: **480-461-8888**
- Tohono O'odham Nation: **1-844-423-8759**
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe: Tucson **520-591-7206**; Guadalupe **480-736-4943**
- White Mountain Apache Tribe: **928-338-4811**
- Navajo Nation: **928-551-0508**

**Veterans Crisis Line:** 988, press 1

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** 988

**National crisis text line:** Text HOME to **741741**. Chat support is available at **crisistextline.org/text-us**.

**Teen Lifeline:** Call or text **602-248-TEEN (8336)**

If you need someone to talk to, call the Warm Line at **602-347-1100**. Get 24/7 support from trained Peer Support Specialists.

*Always call **911** in life-threatening situations.*



# Community Resources

It takes a village to raise a child. These organizations help children in child welfare and their caregivers. Visit [mercycaresaz.org/community-resource-guide](https://mercycaresaz.org/community-resource-guide) for more.

## AHCCCS

Resources for Foster/Kinship/Adoptive Families.  
[azahcccs.gov/foster](https://azahcccs.gov/foster)

## Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation

Grant awards for children who have been adjudicated dependent wards of the court in Arizona.  
[affcf.org](https://affcf.org)

## Safe Kids Worldwide

Working to help families and communities keep kids safe from injuries.  
[safekids.org](https://safekids.org)

## The Foster Alliance

Essential needs for children in child welfare.  
[thefosteralliance.org](https://thefosteralliance.org)

## A Mighty Change of Heart

Personalized duffle bags for children in Arizona entering child welfare.  
[amchaz.org](https://amchaz.org)

## Helen's Hope Chest

Essential needs for children in child welfare.  
[helenshopechest.org](https://helenshopechest.org)

## Jose's Closet

Essential needs for children in child welfare.  
[josescloset.org](https://josescloset.org)

## Strong Families AZ

A network of free home-visiting programs.  
[strongfamiliesaz.com](https://strongfamiliesaz.com)

## Encircle Families

To improve the lives of children with disabilities.  
[encirclefamilies.org](https://encirclefamilies.org)

## Family Involvement Center

Support for securing emotional, physical and behavioral health care in Arizona.  
[familyinvolvementcenter.org](https://familyinvolvementcenter.org)

## Safe to Sleep

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' public education on infant sleep safety.  
[safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov](https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov)

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Health information for children, teens and pregnant women.  
[cdc.gov/parents](https://cdc.gov/parents)

## Milestone Tracker app

Track the child in your care's developmental milestones and share them with their pediatrician.  
[cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker](https://cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker)

## First Things First

Committed to the healthy development and learning of young children from birth to age 5.  
[firstthingsfirst.org](https://firstthingsfirst.org)

## Sesame Workshop

Activities and tips for the challenges and joys of ensuring a child's healthy development.  
[sesameworkshop.org](https://sesameworkshop.org)

## Southwest Human Development

Strengthens the foundation that Arizona's children need for a great start in life.  
[swhd.org](https://swhd.org)



## Take advantage of your Member Handbook

The Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Handbook has everything you need to know about your health plan, including:

- Covered services and benefit restrictions
- How to file a complaint, grievance or appeal
- How we make decisions about the care the child in your care receives (called Utilization Management)
- How we evaluate new technology as a covered benefit
- Notice of privacy practices
- Member rights and responsibilities

Member Handbooks are updated every year. If there are major changes, we will send a letter about it at least 30 days before the changes are effective.

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**The Member Handbook can be viewed online.**

Prefer a hard copy? Call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services to have one mailed to you.

Let us know if you need it in another language, a larger font or other formats.

**HEALTH MATTERS** is published for Mercy Care DCS CHP members.

4750 S. 44th Place, Suite 150,  
Phoenix, AZ 85040.

This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

Call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM, at **1-602-212-4983** or **1-833-711-0776** (TTY 711).

Or call the 24-hour nurse line: **1-602-212-4983** or **1-833-711-0776**.

**MercyCareAZ.org**

## **Nondiscrimination Notice**

Mercy Care DCS CHP complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. Mercy Care DCS CHP does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, health status or need for health care services.

### **Mercy Care DCS CHP:**

- Provides no-cost aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
  - Qualified sign language interpreters
  - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides no-cost language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
  - Qualified interpreters
  - Information written in other languages

If you need a qualified interpreter, written information in other formats, translation or other services, call the number on the member's ID card or **1-800-385-4104 (TTY:711)**.

If you believe that Mercy Care DCS CHP has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex, you can file a grievance with our Civil Rights Coordinator at:

Address:           Attn: Civil Rights Coordinator  
                      4750 S. 44th Place, Ste. 150  
                      Phoenix, AZ 85040  
Telephone:       **1-888-234-7358 (TTY 711)**  
Email:             MedicaidCRCoordinator@MercyCareAZ.org

You can file a grievance in person or by mail or email. If you need help filing a grievance, our Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, SW Room 509F, HHH Building, Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 1-800-537-7697 (TDD).

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

This notice is available on the Mercy Care website at

<https://www.mercycareaz.org/content/dam/mercycare/pdf/MercyCare-1557-Notice-16Tags-020421-ua1.pdf>.

