

THE PATIENT PRESCRIPTION



Your Health Begins Here



Quality Spotlight - Cardiovascular Health

HopeHealth's quality focus for February is cardiovascular health. This clinical focus includes measures such as managing high blood pressure, prescribing aspirin for ischemic vascular disease, prescribing statins for cardiovascular disease, and screening for aortic aneurysms.

Below, read about how to calculate your own risk for heart disease.

Assess Your Risk for Heart Disease: The Earlier, the Better!

Brinda Chokshi, MD

Cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks and strokes, remains a high-level threat in the US, accounting for one death every 34 seconds. Since heart disease develops slowly over time, there has been an increased focus on assessing and treating cardiovascular risk earlier in life.

Getting screened earlier can help decrease your risk as you age. Since each person has their own unique health considerations, think of a cardiovascular screening as a health puzzle to piece together with your health care provider. Analyzing risk factors, any current medical conditions, and different test options can help you make informed decisions with your provider for optimizing cardiovascular health at any age.



Risk Factors

Research indicates that over 90% of men and 80% of women who had a fatal or non-fatal event related to cardiovascular disease, such as a heart attack or stroke, had at least one elevated risk factor. Risk factors that *can* be controlled include high blood pressure, high levels of blood fats or lipids in the blood, tobacco use, chronic kidney disease, obesity, or diabetes. The risk factors we *can't* control include genetics and family history, gender, and getting older.

A healthy lifestyle is recommended as a strong first approach to preventing cardiovascular disease and to help manage any cardiovascular-related conditions. Lifestyle factors, including healthy eating, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, managing stress, and having meaningful connections, are cornerstones of good health. Improvements in any of these areas can help decrease your risk. Keeping blood pressure and lipids in healthier ranges, working with your

provider to keep diabetes in control, maintaining a healthy body weight, and treating chronic kidney disease all help decrease cardiovascular disease risk.

In 2024, it was estimated that around 48% of Americans have high blood pressure, 11% have diabetes, 38% have prediabetes, and about 73% are at an unhealthy weight. This means many people have risk factors for cardiovascular disease that they may not be aware of.

Assessing cardiovascular risk is easily completed during an annual health checkup. Start scheduling yearly exams with annual labs and screenings in your early 30s at the latest. Find a health care provider you can trust and speak with openly about your health.

Here are a few of the basic tests used to establish your risk profile:

Blood Pressure

Blood pressure is a simple baseline test measuring pressure in the arteries as the heart beats. Uncontrolled high blood pressure is directly linked to heart disease, strokes, kidney disease, and dementia. Having high blood pressure causes the heart to work harder, which can lead to it becoming thicker and stiffer over time. High blood pressure also damages blood vessels in the body, especially in the heart, brain, and kidneys. There are many medications available to control high blood pressure. Maintaining a blood pressure reading of under 130/80 is crucial for keeping the vessels and organs throughout the body healthy.

Lipid Profile

This fasting blood test checks your total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, and triglycerides, which are different types of fats in the body. Research indicates that the total amount of cholesterol is not as significant as the levels of different types of fat particles in the blood.

- **LDL, or low-density lipoprotein**, known as the “bad” cholesterol, causes sticky cells to build up in arteries, forming plaque. An increased focus on maintaining lower LDL levels for longer is emphasized to prevent and treat heart disease. The more risk factors a person has, the more important it is to keep LDL levels lower. An LDL level of 100 or lower is recommended. However, depending on risk factors such as diabetes or family history, lowering LDL to below 70 significantly reduces the long-term risk of developing and treating heart disease. Statin medications, of varying intensity depending on risk factors, are the first line of defense in treating higher LDL and other lipid levels and have been used safely for decades. The Mediterranean diet can also help decrease LDL levels.
- **HDL or high-density lipoprotein**, known as the “good” cholesterol, helps protect the lining of blood vessels, prevents clots, and decreases blood vessel inflammation. Aim for HDL levels of 45-60 or higher. Regular exercise helps increase HDL, along with taking niacin and omega fatty acids. Talk with your provider about strategies to increase HDL.
- **Triglycerides** are another type of fat in the blood that increases the risk of heart disease. A high triglyceride level doesn’t directly impact arterial walls, but it causes more inflammation to promote plaque buildup. Aim for a triglyceride level of less than 150.

Other fat particles in the blood can also be measured, including ApoB and LP(a).

- **ApoB or Apolipoprotein B** is a specific protein that transports LDL cholesterol in the blood and is linked to heart disease risk. This test is more specific than LDL alone. It can be helpful for a person who may have a normal LDL level but also has a strong family history of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, or high triglyceride levels.
- **LP(a) or Lipoprotein A** is another type of LDL particle linked to heart disease risk. Primarily genetic, this particle is also linked to inflammation in the arteries and creates an environment for plaque buildup.

PREVENT Risk Calculator

Providers may also use an online cardiovascular risk calculator. The American Heart Association developed the PREVENT calculator as a preventive measure for people with no known heart disease, [found here](#).

In 2023, the PREVENT calculator introduced a 30-year risk indicator, allowing younger people to assess their risk and make lifestyle changes earlier. Using PREVENT includes answering risk factor questions and inputting lab results to assess a 10- or 30-year risk of developing cardiovascular disease, depending on your age. These types of assessment tools are general and can be used to discuss risks with your provider, review any lifestyle changes or appropriate medications, or determine if further testing is needed.

CT Calcium Score

This is a one-time specialized scan of the heart used to detect heart disease before any symptoms develop. It measures the amount of calcium in the four main coronary arteries. Calcium buildup can narrow the arteries and reduce blood flow to the heart. This test is indicated with a higher LDL level and two other risk factors. You are given a risk score that can help your provider make recommendations for further testing, treatment, or referral to a cardiologist. Your insurance may cover a CT calcium score, and if not, it usually costs around \$150, making it a very reasonable way to assess your risk of heart disease.

To help prevent cardiovascular disease events, become aware of risk factors starting in your 20s or early 30s, complete annual check-ups, and discuss prevention or treatment options with your health care provider to reduce your risk. Putting the pieces of the cardiovascular risk puzzle together earlier means taking care of yourself now and for the future!

2026 HopeHealth Town Hall Series



TOWN HALL MEETING

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOPEHEALTH
WITH CARL HUMPHRIES, CEO



MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2026 | 4:30 – 5:30 PM

**STREATER COMMUNITY CENTER
301 N. DARGAN STREET | FLORENCE, SC**

REGISTER

**FREE TO JOIN | OPEN TO PATIENTS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS
FOR MORE INFORMATION | (843) 667-9414**

We are pleased to announce the 2026 HopeHealth Town Hall Series.

Throughout the year, CEO Carl Humphries will host quarterly town hall meetings for patients and community members, designed to build awareness and deepen understanding of HopeHealth's mission, services, and unique role as a community health center.

Our first event will be held at the Streater Community Center on Monday, March 23, from 4:30 to 5:30 pm.

For more information and to register, visit our [Facebook page](#) or the [website](#).

Black History Month Spotlight

Dr. Alonzo Clifton McClellan

Dr. Alonzo Clifton McClellan was a Black doctor from Columbia, SC, who moved to Charleston after graduating from medical school. He co-founded the Charleston Hospital and Training School for Nurses, established in 1897 to provide education for Black nurses, care for Black patients, and hospital privileges for Black doctors. Dr. McClellan also established King Street's first Black drugstore, the People's Pharmacy, and worked with three other Black physicians to establish the Palmetto Association of Physicians, Pharmacists, and Dentists of South Carolina, a Black medical society.



[Click here](#) to read more about Dr. Alonzo Clifton McClellan.

Dr. Cyril O. Spann

Dr. Cyril O. Spann Sr. was a Chester, SC native who served as the Chief of Staff of the historic Good Samaritan-Waverly Hospital in Columbia from 1966 to 1973, when the hospital closed. He was one of the first fully-trained Black surgeons in South Carolina, and may have been the only Black surgeon in the state during the 1960s and 1970s, the height of the civil rights era.

He traveled across the state serving Black patients until his death in 1979, when medical care for Black South Carolinians was harder to come by. The practice he opened, the Dr. C.O. Spann Medical Office, served patients until 1995. Today, it is on the National Register of Historic Places.



[Click here](#) to read more about Dr. Cyril O. Spann.

Diversity Works Magazine



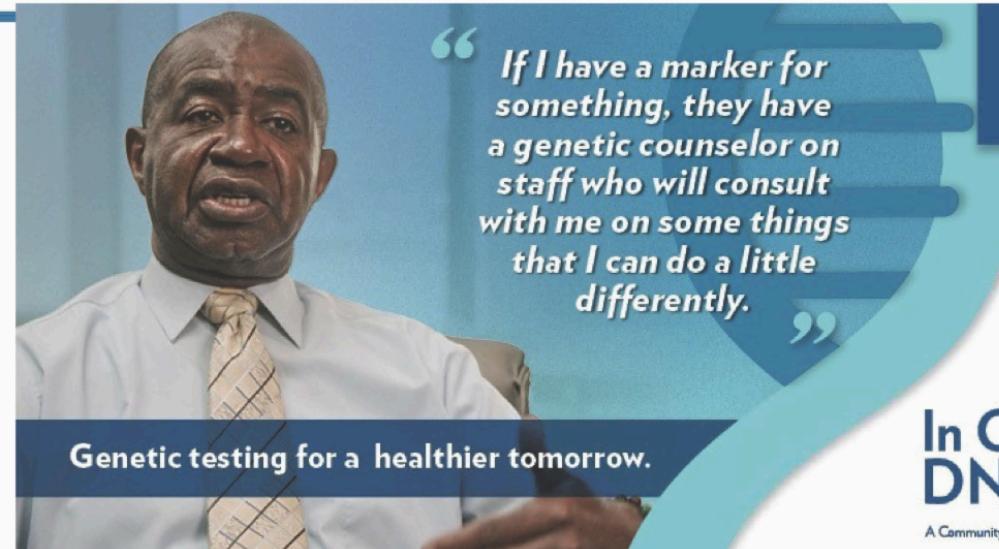
HopeHealth frequently partners with Diversity Works, a magazine for the socially conscious and responsible worker at any level. The magazine is committed to showcasing organizations and employees that represent best practices in workforce diversity and supplier selection. Through editorial content and other signature promotions, Diversity Works informs its readership about appreciating and accepting the physical, social, cultural, and other differences in others.

It is a Black-owned publication, and the organization also offers Diversity Focus trainings.

[Click here](#) to learn more about Diversity Works Magazine and view the latest issue.

Patient Resources

In Our DNA SC Event



In Our DNA SC

A Community Health Research Project

Join us for a Sample Collection Event

In Our DNA SC A Community Health
Research Project
HopeHealth in Kingstree

FREE TO ANYONE 18 & UP!

Join MUSC's In Our DNA SC study team for a sample collection event at HopeHealth in Kingstree.

We are looking to enroll 100,000 South Carolinians to learn more about your genetic risk for certain cancers and heart disease at no cost to you. With your participation, we can create a healthier South Carolina for generations to come.

Date: February 25, 2026 **Time:** 10 am - 2 pm

Location: 520 Thurgood Marshall Hwy. Suite B
Kingstree, SC 29556

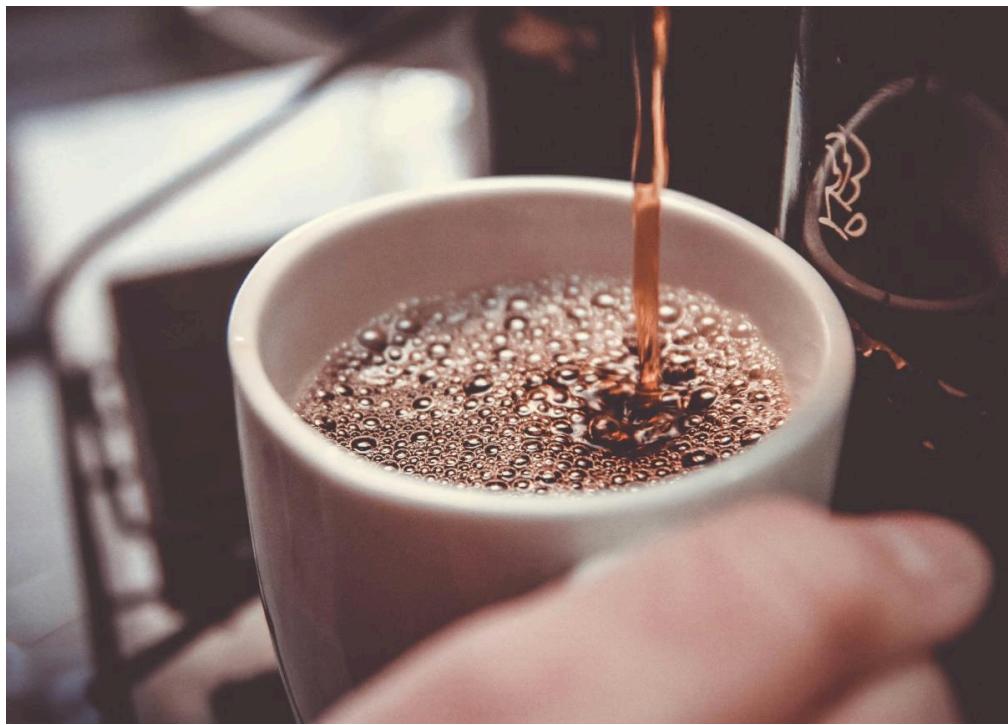


**Scan this QR code
to get started!**



Scan the QR code or [click here](#) to sign up.

Coffee With Community Health Workers



Join us for conversation, connection, and care at the Streeter Community Center, located beside the HopeHealth Medical Plaza.

Monday - Friday | 9-11 AM
Streeter Community Center | 301 North Dargan Street, Florence

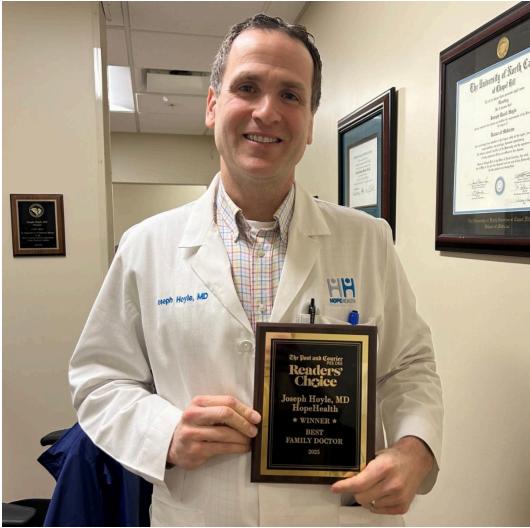
Come grab a cup of coffee and chat with your local Community Health Workers. In a relaxed setting, you can learn about health resources, ask questions, and connect with support. Free Coffee, friendly faces, and health info!

Visit hope-health.org/community/events for a list of free programs offered at the Streeter Community Center and other locations.

Post & Courier Pee Dee Readers' Choice Awards

**The Post and Courier
PEE DEE**
Readers' Choice

2025 - 2026 WINNER



Thank you again for voting for us in the Post & Courier Pee Dee Readers' Choice awards! HopeHealth won the following awards:

Best Family Practice
Best Family Doctor - Dr. Joseph Hoyle
Best Counselor or Therapist - Nicholas Lee, LPC, NCC
Best Pharmacy

We received runner-up in the holistic health care and pediatric care categories.

MUSC Community Needs Assessment

Your Voice Matters

2026 COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As an important member of the community, your thoughts on local health care issues are essential in our efforts to build systems that provide the best care. MUSC Health is conducting a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) in counties throughout South Carolina to identify top health care priorities in our community.

Take the survey **TODAY**
in less than 10 minutes!

surveymonkey.com/r/MUSCCHNA2026



For more information or questions about the 2026 CHNA, contact Kimberly Balaguer at balaguer@musc.edu.



Tu Voz Importa

EVALUACIÓN DE NECESIDADES DE SALUD COMUNITARIA 2026

Como miembro importante de la comunidad, sus opiniones sobre los temas de atención médica local son esenciales para nuestros esfuerzos de construir sistemas que brinden la mejor atención posible. MUSC Health está realizando una Evaluación de Necesidades de Salud Comunitaria (CHNA, por sus siglas en inglés) en condados de todo Carolina del Sur para identificar las principales prioridades de salud en nuestra comunidad.

¡Complete la encuesta HOY en menos de 10 minutos!

surveymonkey.com/r/MUSCCHNA2026_ESP



Para más información o si tiene preguntas sobre la CHNA 2026, comuníquese con Kimberly Balaguer al balaguer@musc.edu.



Help strengthen our communities. HopeHealth is working alongside MUSC on the 2026 Community Health Needs Assessment across the eleven counties they serve. By identifying key health needs in each community, this work helps guide improvements in care and services.

The survey takes less than ten minutes to complete, and the feedback that you share about your health, the health of your family, and the health of your community will be incredibly helpful. It will be accessible until February 20.

Please take the survey today by clicking the link for the [English](#) or [Spanish](#) survey. Please also encourage our patients to take the survey!

Recipe Spotlight

Fruit and Nut Bars

This makes 16 small bars or 8 larger bars.
Great for a quick breakfast or snack!

Ingredients:

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 large eggs
- 1/3 cup honey, maple syrup, or agave nectar
- ½ cup milk of choice
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts (or other nuts/seeds, including pecans, almond slices, or pumpkin seeds)
- ¼ cup raisins (or dried cranberries, frozen fruit, or chocolate chips)



Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line an 8"x8" square baking pan with parchment paper, with a little extra hanging over the sides.
- In a medium bowl, mix together the dry ingredients – oats, baking powder, salt, and cinnamon.
- In a larger bowl, mix together the wet ingredients - eggs, sweetener, milk, applesauce, and vanilla extract.
- Pour the dry ingredients over the wet ingredients, mix together, and let sit for 20 minutes to absorb moisture so the bars won't crumble.
- Fold in the nuts and fruit, and spread the mixture into the baking pan.
- Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until edges are golden brown.
- Cool and cut into 16 squares about 2"x2" in size.

Tips:

- Store bars in the fridge for up to 5 days.
- This recipe is easily doubled. Bake each batch separately, or use a larger baking pan and bake the doubled quantity an extra 10 minutes.
- Bars can easily be frozen separately. Thaw in the fridge overnight before eating,
- To boost the protein content, add one scoop of protein powder with 2 tbsp. milk.

Visit hope-health.org/community/events to learn about and sign up for free community classes offered by HopeHealth! Topics range from healthy cooking to diabetes management, prioritizing movement, carbohydrate counting, and more.

How satisfied were you with the content of this email?

5 - Very Satisfied

4 - Satisfied

3 - Neutral

2 - Dissatisfied

1 - Very Dissatisfied

Care to offer more feedback? [Click here](#) to send an email!

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hope-health.org

Support Community Health Centers at hcadvocacy.org. Become an advocate today!

HopeHealth | 360 N. Irby St. | Florence, SC 29501 US

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