



Read on for the inside scoop on making 2019 your happiest, healthiest year yet!

Dear Member

2019 is off to a fast start! It's a new year, with new challenges and new opportunities to be the happiest, healthiest possible version of yourself. In this edition, our feature article will help you to move more, with small changes that make a big difference!

Also featured this month:

- The importance of healthy family habits.
- Statistics on cardiovascular diseases and how to reduce your risk.
- Snacking with diabetes. Yes! Even with diabetes, you can still enjoy delicious, yet healthy snack options to tickle the taste buds and keep the hunger pains at bay.

The more you know, the smarter you can live in 2019!

POLMED YOUR CARE Support Team

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2019

5 HABITS OF HEALTHY FAMILIES

YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH IS A TEAM EFFORT



From eating nutritious foods, to brushing your teeth twice a day – forming healthy habits takes time, patience and repetition! What makes it even tougher is that your family's health habits can influence yours in the long run too.


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3 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MOVE MORE

Start adding small movements to your day and reap the rewards of staying fit and healthy.

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SNACKING FOR DIABETES MADE EASY

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YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH IS A TEAM EFFORT



From eating nutritious foods, to brushing your teeth twice a day – forming healthy habits takes time, patience and repetition! What makes it even tougher is that your family's health habits can influence yours in the long run too.

A study by the University of Leeds found a link between the health habits of parents and their children. Approximately 21 000 participants were studied, and their smoking habits, obesity and lack of exercise were compared with their parents unhealthy habits. The results revealed the negative habits of parents impacted their children's future health habits and lifestyles.



For example, if a person's father smoked when they were 12, they were almost twice as likely to smoke as those whose fathers didn't smoke.

Besides negative behaviours, not having regular check-ups with your doctor means you're unaware of health risks.

5 THINGS HEALTHY FAMILIES DO:



1 Go for regular health check-ups

Regular tests mean you and your family can identify disorders early. Early detection means early treatment, upping your chances of being cured. Typically, a health exam consists of a height, blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, throat, ear and eye check. It could include a chest X-ray if you're a heavy smoker, and a heart check if you're at risk for heart disease.



2 Manage their health risks

Health risks may be split into genetic and behavioural factors. Diseases you can inherit from your parents are called genetic conditions. Your family's history with a disease puts you at risk too. For example, if both your parents have hypertension, your risk for developing it increases. Behavioural factors are related to one's lifestyle, i.e. the things that an individual does or does not do.

Manage genetic factors:

- Schedule regular doctor check-ups for the family.
- Follow a wholesome diet.
- Exercise regularly.
- Do not smoke or drink too much alcohol.
- Do not ignore troubling symptoms!

Manage behavioural factors:

- Avoid cigarette chemicals (stop smoking and avoid being around smokers).
- Be physically active.
- Make healthy nutritional choices.
- Reduce alcohol intake.
- Always wear sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.



3 Cook their meals and limit fast foods

Prepare your meals with fresh ingredients. Avoid deep frying. Grill, steam or bake your meals. Preparing food at home means you can take charge of how much sugar, salt, fat and overall kilojoules are packed into your diet. Whereas store-bought, processed or fast foods are often loaded with salt, sugar and fat. Teach your kids to read food labels and if you eat out, opt for healthy options. Fill your cupboards with wholegrains, fresh fruit and vegetables, lean protein and healthy fats.



4 Take medication as prescribed

Taking it as prescribed means the correct dose, at the right time and in the proper way. Ask your pharmacist about the most effective way to take your medication (e.g. before or after eating). Take your medication at the same time every day (e.g. every morning after breakfast). Use a calendar to track and fill your prescription at the same time every month or week.



5 Exercise regularly

Make exercise a daily family routine. Go for a walk after supper. Do parkruns together. Join dance classes or make use of the public swimming pools. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise every day. Physical activity improves your overall quality of life. It helps reduce the risk of developing diseases like diabetes and heart diseases, helps manage your weight, lowers blood pressure, keeps your cholesterol at a healthy level and boosts energy.

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FOLLOW YOUR HEART TO GOOD HEALTH



Did you know that globally, cardiovascular disease (CVD) claims more lives than tuberculosis (TB), HIV and malaria combined?

This means that CVD kills almost 18 million people in the world each year – many through heart attacks and strokes. And the number is growing ...

WHAT ARE CVDs?

According to the British Medical Association, the term “cardiovascular disease” refers to disorders of the heart, blood vessels and blood circulation.

These disorders include coronary heart disease (when the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle become hardened and narrowed), and cerebrovascular disease (disease of the blood vessels supplying the brain), among others.

Up to 80% of CVD-related deaths in people younger than 65 are preventable through a healthy diet, regular exercise, and not using tobacco, notes the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa.

In turn, not controlling these lifestyle factors can contribute to or exacerbate certain conditions that increases your risk for CVD. These conditions include:



- **Diabetes:** High blood sugar levels damage the blood vessels as well as the nerves that control the heart and blood vessels.



- **Hypertension:** Excess strain from high blood pressure causes the coronary arteries to become narrowed from a build-up of fat, cholesterol and other substances.



- **High cholesterol:** Having too much “bad” cholesterol in the blood can clog up the arteries carrying blood around the body.



In South Africa:

- More than 200 people die every day from heart disease or strokes.
- 5 people have heart attacks and 10 people have strokes every hour.
- More people die of CVD than of all cancers combined.



Globally:

- The largest burden of disease comes from CVD (15-16%).
- An estimated 422.7 million people have CVD and almost 18 million people die of CVD every year.
- More than half of CVD deaths occur before age 65 and these premature deaths in people aged 35-64 years are expected to increase by 41% by 2030.

AM I AT RISK?

There are two types of risk factors for CVD: modifiable and non-modifiable.

While non-modifiable risk factors cannot be changed, you do have control over the modifiable ones. If you control these well, you can lower your chances of developing CVD.

Non-modifiable risk factors:

55+



- **Age** – risk increases as you get older, with the risk of stroke doubling every decade after the age of 55.
- **Gender** – men are at greater risk.
- **Family history** – for example, if your father or brother suffered a heart attack before the age of 55, or your mom or sister suffered one before the age of 65, you're at greater risk.
- **Ethnicity** – African or Asian ancestry increases your risk.
- **Socioeconomic status** – those living in poverty have a greater risk.

Modifiable risk factors:



- Raised or altered levels of **blood cholesterol**.
- **Raised triglyceride levels** with low HDL-cholesterol levels.
- **High blood pressure** – hypertension causes about 50% of ischemic strokes and increases the risk of haemorrhagic stroke.
- **Diabetes** – you're up to four times more likely to develop CVD.
- Smoking or using other forms of **tobacco**.
- Being **overweight/obese** – your risk for hypertension, diabetes and atherosclerosis is higher, and these conditions put you at high risk of CVD.
- Being **inactive**.
- Drinking **alcohol** excessively.
- Excessive **stress**.

CHECK IN WITH YOUR DOCTOR



Regularly **check in with your doctor** and make sure you “know your numbers” (e.g. your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels). Use the sessions with your doctor to talk about your CVD risk and how to manage it.



A helpful guide is the list of questions below. You may want to ask some of these when you chat to your doctor about your risk for CVD. **Discussing your questions and concerns with a doctor** can sometimes be a little scary, but it is important that you understand your condition and know how to take care of yourself.



Print out the checklist below and tick the questions you'd like to discuss with your doctor at your next visit. You can ask these questions to make sure you get all the guidance you need.

QUESTIONS TO YOUR DOCTOR

1.	How long will it take before my treatment starts working?	
2.	Can I stop the treatment when I feel better?	
3.	I think I may be experiencing side effects from my medication. Do I need to change the medication, or will they go away?	
4.	(Explain your symptoms to your doctor.) Is this part of my condition? Is there anything I can do about these problems?	
5.	I understand that exercise could help my condition. Is there any type of exercise that is unsafe for me to do? Do you have any recommendations?	
6.	I am having trouble with my diet and/or weight and/or sleep. What do you recommend?	
7.	I have been having trouble managing my other health problems. Can we please discuss my other health concerns?	
8.	Will my alcohol and/or tobacco use affect my treatment?	
9.	I'd like to check up on my general health regularly. When do I need my next general check-up?	

GOOD TO KNOW If you're at risk for CVD, you should visit your doctor regularly, whether you experience the below symptoms or not.

SYMPTOMS TO LOOK OUT FOR

The following signs and symptoms could be an indication of CVD, and may even point to a cardiovascular emergency (e.g. a heart attack or stroke). Get medical help as soon as possible.

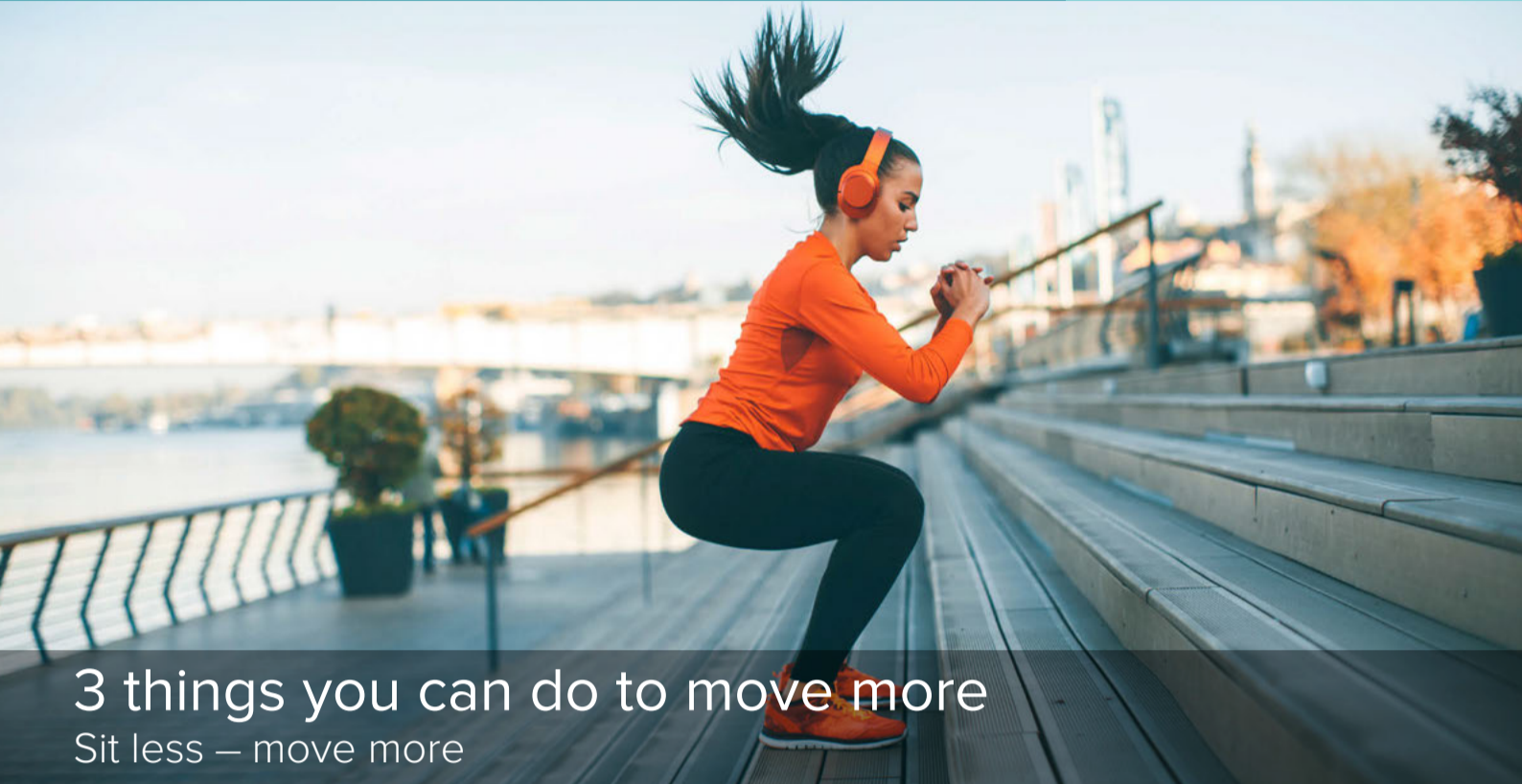
- Swollen feet or ankles
- Extreme fatigue
- Irregular heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Feeling sweaty

- Leg or arm pain
- Jaw or back pain
- Shortness of breath
- A choking sensation
- Feeling sick (e.g. nauseous)

- Stomach pain (e.g. a burning, indigestion-type pain)

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3 things you can do to move more

Sit less – move more

These days, our basic needs can be met with a quick click of a button. You can buy food online, shop for clothes, a car and a home – all without moving.

Throw in TV, desk jobs and the Internet, and it's no wonder we're all in a health danger zone. The more we sit, the higher our risk of diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer.

Start adding small movements to your day and reap the rewards of staying fit and healthy.

Move it

Exercise helps to increase your levels of HDL cholesterol, which helps clean up plaque on the arteries. The World Health Organisation ranks physical inactivity alongside tobacco use and the harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets as factors that increase the risk of dying from non-communicable diseases. These kill over 41 million people each year.

Being physically active improves your overall energy levels and endurance while your bones maintain strength. According to the Harvard Medical School, movement can impact your feelings too. Regular aerobic exercise can reduce anxiety by making your brain's "fight or flight" system less reactive.

Every step counts

To get the best results from exercising you will need an action plan. An action plan answers the following: what, how much, when and how often. There are various activities you can include in your daily life to increase mobility and reduce sedentary behaviour.

Track your progress on a calendar. Gradually increase your activity levels and over time, you'll find that this becomes a habit. Speak to your doctor about what may be suitable for you and find the best ways to increase your physical activity. For you to get started, you'll need to create prompts and cues, as well as an action plan.



1. Create prompts

A prompt is anything that can cause or encourage an action. For example, if you want to start doing a physical activity every day, a prompt could be putting a sticky note on your desk as a reminder or using an app that will alert you to take a walk.

2. Set an action plan

An action plan is a plan that helps you to achieve your goal. An action plan includes goal-setting. When setting your goals, you should answer the following: what, how much, when and how often? For example, take a walk for 15 minutes during your lunch break, thrice a week.

3. Make small changes for big changes

Use everyday activities to move more. For example, if you take the bus, get off at an earlier stop so that you'll walk a short distance. Another example would be to take the stairs rather than the lift at work. Parking further away from the entrance of a building will also allow you to move more.

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Snacking for diabetes made easy

Understand why nibbling is important

If you have diabetes, regulating your blood sugar is very important. Along with insulin and diabetes medication, your diet plays an important role in your blood sugar levels. This is because food, particularly carbohydrates, raises your blood sugar.

The top three nutrients found in food are carbohydrates, protein and fat. Carbohydrates are commonly found in bread, potato, pasta, rice, cereal and some fruit and vegetables. Carbs quickly turn into sugar which raises your blood sugar level. Protein and fat can also be turned into sugar, but not as fast.

These nutrients help balance your blood sugar. This means you must choose your daily meals very carefully, including your snacks.

Snack facts

Snacking with diabetes is important because it helps balance your blood sugar between meals. Before choosing snacks, ask your doctor whether you should be snacking at certain times to prevent low blood sugar. This will be based on the type of diabetes you have, your treatment plan, your low blood sugar pattern, your level of physical activity and your lifestyle.

For example, if you have Type 1 diabetes you might need a small snack between meals to help keep your blood sugar levels up. But this is not permission to snack all day long – you don't want to end up with a weight problem!

If you have Type 1 diabetes you might need a small snack between meals to help keep your blood sugar levels up.

Eat smart

- Plan your snacks in advance to ensure you'll stay in your calorie range.
- Create a snack calendar. Put it on your fridge and your phone.
- Stock up on ingredients and prep once or twice a week so you won't run out. For example, on a Sunday and a Wednesday.
- "Include healthy carbs like wholegrains, fruits and vegetables," says dietician Toby Smithson, author of *Diabetes Meal Planning and Nutrition for Dummies*.
- Low-carb snacks will have the least impact on your blood sugar. Check food labels for carbs. Low-carb options include cucumber, cauliflower, broccoli, unglazed peanuts, sunflower seeds and celery sticks.
- The amount of carbohydrates a person should eat varies. Check your blood glucose levels before and two hours after meals to know how many carbohydrates you should be eating.
- Protein and fat can help you feel fuller for longer and has a minimal effect on your blood sugar levels. They need to be eaten in moderation though, particularly fat.
- Check food labels for ingredients like saturated and artificial trans-fat which you should try to avoid.
- Look at the total carbs on labels when choosing a snack, not just the grams of sugar.

Healthy swaps

Choose nutritious snacks that will satisfy your hunger and balance your blood sugar. Stick to snacks with a maximum of 30 grams of carbs. Keep an eye out for seemingly healthy snacks that could skyrocket your blood sugar. For example, dried fruit like raisins have twice the amount of sugar than fresh fruit and raises your blood sugar quickly.

Eat this: 3 cups air-popped popcorn with 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese

Nutritional values: 135 calories, 4g fat, 2g saturated fat, 20g carbohydrate, 3.5g fibre, 150g sodium, 6g protein

Not this: Small packet of potato chips

Nutritional value: 536 calories (per 100g), 35g fat, 11g saturated fat, 53g carbohydrates, 5g fibre, 8mg sodium, 7g protein, 0.2g sugar

Eat this: 1 sliced cucumber with 2 tablespoons hummus or guacamole

Nutritional value: 115 calories, 6g fat, 1g saturated fat, 15g carbohydrates, 3g fibre, 120mg sodium, 4g protein

Not this: Dried fruit per 100g

Nutritional value: 359 calories, 3g fat, 1g saturated fat, 83g carbohydrates, 0g fibre, 403g sodium, 1g protein

Eat this: 1 non-fat plain Greek yoghurt per 150g

Nutritional value: 139 calories, 9g fat, 10.2g carbohydrate, 0g fibre, 5.4g protein

Not this: Vanilla ice-cream per 100g

Nutritional value: 207 calories, 11g fat, 7g saturated fat, 24g carbohydrates, 1g fibre, 80mg sodium, 4g protein



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