



**POLMED**<sup>®</sup>

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

# YOUR CARE

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2018



“Healthy citizens are the greatest asset any country can have.”  
– Winston S. Churchill

Dear Member

The flu vaccine is so readily available, yet thousands of South Africans die from flu each year. With winter on its way, we look at why the **flu vaccine** is important and advise when you should get vaccinated.

Also featured this month:

- Many asthma sufferers don't use their pumps correctly – we bring you a step-by-step guide on **how to use your asthma pump**.
- We share some of the differences between normal stress and **unhealthy anxiety**, so you can get help if needed.
- In our final feature, we illustrate how you can **save time and money with a healthier diet**.

Enjoy the read!

**POLMED YOUR CARE Support Team**



## Tired of the flu?

Your annual flu vaccination is your best defence against the flu virus. Get vaccinated as soon as possible before winter arrives – paid from your Preventative Care Benefits.

[Read more ...](#)



## When your anxiety is unhealthy

Anxiety is a natural reaction to stress, but excessive worrying is not. When normal stress turns into unhealthy anxiety, it's time to get help.

[Read more ...](#)



## How to use an asthma pump

Are you holding your asthma pump correctly? Breathing at the right time? Remembering to shake the device? Knowing how to use your asthma pump correctly could save your life.

[Read more ...](#)



## Healthy food starts with you

Contrary to popular belief, healthy eating is NOT more expensive. Find out how a healthier diet could save you time and money.

[Read more ...](#)

If you have any questions or need more information, please call POLMED on 0860 765 633 (select the option for the Disease Management Programme), or send an email to [polmeddiseaseman@medscheme.co.za](mailto:polmeddiseaseman@medscheme.co.za) with your membership number and contact details.



## Tired of the flu?

**Up to eleven thousand people die from the flu each year in South Africa. And yet the flu vaccination is so readily available.**

Flu is caused by an influenza virus. This virus lives in an infected person's nose and throat and activates when you speak, sneeze or cough. It becomes infectious, which means it can make someone else sick too.

### How the flu affects your body

At first, you may have chills, fever, coughing, a sore throat and body aches. The flu can also bring headaches, tiredness, muscle pain, vomiting and diarrhoea. In people with weaker immune systems, the flu is even more serious.

- Primary influenza viral pneumonia occurs when the flu virus causes severe lung damage. You'll start with the usual symptoms of flu, but the fever persists, your cough worsens and you'll become extremely short of breath. In severe cases, you may have a bluish tinge and become confused from a lack of oxygen. This form of pneumonia needs hospital care.
- Secondary bacterial pneumonia is more common than viral pneumonia and occurs when bacteria cause a secondary infection in the lungs. Typical symptoms include recurrence of fever, shortness of breath and secretions during coughing four to 14 days after the symptoms have almost disappeared.
- The flu can cause otitis media (a type of ear infection) and croup (a type of respiratory infection) in children. In most cases, the ear infection is caused by the virus itself, so antibiotics are seldom necessary.
- In rare cases, inflammation of the muscles (myositis) can occur. It's more common in children. Painful tender leg muscles are a common symptom. Also, very rarely, the heart muscle may become inflamed (myocarditis). Symptoms include tiredness, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, a rapid pulse and discomfort in the chest.

### Why the flu vaccine is important

The vaccine is necessary because the flu virus changes every year, so your vaccination from last year will not keep you safe this year. The injection helps your immune system fight off the virus by producing antibodies. Think of antibodies as little immune system soldiers that battle the flu virus.

**To properly protect yourself, you and your family should be vaccinated as soon as possible before winter arrives.**

Some people have the misconception that getting the flu shot can give you the flu. According to the Centers for Disease Control in America, "A flu shot cannot cause flu illness. Flu vaccines given with a needle are currently made either with flu vaccine viruses that have been 'inactivated' and are not infectious, or with no flu vaccine viruses at all. The most common side-effects from the shot are soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given. Serious allergic reactions to flu vaccines are very rare."

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### When to get vaccinated

"The sooner the better, before the winter flu season hits us," says Mogologolo Phasha, Chairman of the Independent Community Pharmacy Association (ICPA). "Many people die every year because of complications from flu, with most of the deaths occurring in high risk people," explains Phasha. "These are pregnant women; children between the ages of six months and five years; people older than 65; those with HIV/AIDS, and chronic disease sufferers."



#### References:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>
2. [www.health24.com](http://www.health24.com)
3. <https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/in-their-own-words/2016/2016-06/why-its-still-worth-getting-the-flu-vaccine-this-year.html>



## How to use an asthma pump

**Most asthma sufferers don't use their pumps correctly. The World Health Organization says we have the highest asthma death rate in Africa. Knowing how to use your pump the right way could save your life.**

### Metered-dose inhaler

*This type of asthma inhaler can be used as a daily controller.*

1. Remove the cap, hold your inhaler upright, and give at least three to four shakes.
2. Take a deep breath and breathe out all the way.
3. Hold your inhaler with your index finger on top of the cannister and your thumb on the bottom of the mouthpiece. Place the nozzle in your mouth. Your lips should be sealed tightly around the nozzle. Tilt your head slightly backwards.
4. Breathe in slowly. Press down on the inhaler once to release the medicine. Breathe in deeply so the medicine gets a chance to reach your lungs.
5. Hold your breath and count to 10 or 15. Breathe out slowly through the nose.
6. Repeat until you've inhaled the prescribed number of puffs. Replace the cap.
7. Wait at least 30 seconds before the next puff. Rinse your mouth with water, gargle and spit out.

### Breath-activated inhaler

*These inhalers can deliver more of the medicines to the airways in your chest. If you think that the metered-dose inhaler is not helping, speak to your doctor about a breath-activated inhaler.*

1. Remove the cap and load a dose of medicine (this will depend on the type of inhaler).
2. Breathe out all the way.
3. Hold your inhaler in your mouth, closing your lips tightly around the opening.
4. Take one fast, deep breath into your lungs.
5. Move the inhaler away from your mouth and hold your breath as you count to 10.  
Now slowly breathe out.
6. Repeat until you've inhaled the prescribed number of puffs. Replace the cap.
7. Rinse your mouth with water, gargle and spit out.

Spacer devices are valuable during an emergency

### Metered-dose (regular) inhaler with a spacer device

*The main advantage of a spacer is that there is no need to coordinate breathing in and activating the metered-dose inhaler. Spacer devices are valuable during an emergency.*

1. Hold your inhaler upright, and shake well.
2. Insert the mouthpiece of the inhaler into the rubber-sealed end of the spacer.
3. Attach the mask to the other end, if you're using one.
4. Turn your head away from the spacer and breathe out all the way.
5. The spacer should be in your mouth between your teeth, with your lips closed tightly over the mouthpiece. If you're using a mask, place it over your nose and mouth, and make sure it seals well.
6. Press down on the inhaler once to release the medicine.
7. Breathe in as deeply as you can.
8. Hold your breath as you count to 10.
9. Repeat until you've inhaled the prescribed number of puffs.
10. Rinse your mouth with water.



### In an emergency:

- If you're using a reliever and have an acute attack, administer two puffs.
- If you have a spacer, use it with the pump, so the spray can get down deeply into your chest.
- If the attack is very bad or the above doesn't work, use five to 10 puffs in a row.
- If this still doesn't work, get to the hospital.

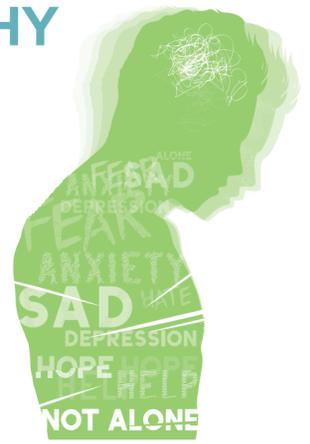
#### References:

1. National Asthma Education Programme
2. Global Strategy for Asthma Management and Prevention (2016 update)
3. Lalloo U, Ainslie G, Wong M, Abdool-Gaffar S, Irusen E, Mash R, Feldman C, O'Brien J and Jack C. Guidelines for the management of chronic asthma in adolescents and adults. Working Group of the South African Thoracic Society. SA Fam Pract 2007;49(5).
4. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/many-asthma-patients-use-their-inhalers-incorrectly-research-shows-1488822193>
5. Professor Praneet Valodia

## ➤ WHEN YOUR ANXIETY IS UNHEALTHY OVERCOME EXCESSIVE WORRYING

Feeling anxious before a presentation is normal, but being overcome with worry before work every day is not.

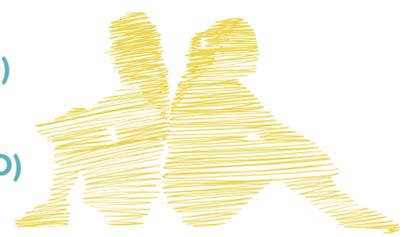
**Anxiety is a natural reaction to worry or stress, and when harnessed productively, can spur you to complete tasks efficiently.**



## THERE ARE SEVERAL TYPES OF ANXIETY DISORDERS. Some of the most common examples include:



- Post-traumatic stress disorder (**PTSD**)
- Generalised anxiety disorder (**GAD**)
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (**OCD**)



## NORMAL STRESS VS. ANXIETY DISORDERS

Learn some of the differences between the symptoms of healthy day-to-day anxiety and those of an anxiety disorder to get help if needed.

### Normal stress

- You **worry about the odd thing** but you can still meet your personal and work-related responsibilities.
- You may **spend up to an hour** (on and off) **worrying about an issue.**
- **Worrying about a specific problem**, like crime in your neighbourhood.



### Unhealthy anxiety

- **Worrying interferes with your social life and work.** You feel paralysed and scared to make decisions, go places, socialise, and stand up for yourself.
- You go to bed thinking about a problem, wake up thinking of it and **it nags at you all through your day.**
- **Uncontrolled worrying for no reason and about different things;** some of which have nothing to do with you.

## KNOW THE EFFECTS

Anxiety can cause physical, social and emotional harm over time.



This may include:

- Fear of leaving your home
- Social withdrawal
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Family and relationship problems
- Fear of different situations and things
- Suicidal thoughts
- A weakened immune system

## YOUR DOCTOR CAN HELP



Understanding mental health, its treatment and what it means for your lifestyle may seem overwhelming. Have a conversation with your doctor to confirm your diagnosis and then use the checklist below to demystify your conditions. You may find that managing your mental health is a lot simpler than you think!

### Questions for your doctor:

1. I think I may be at risk for an anxiety disorder. Would you be able to confirm this?
2. What is anxiety?
3. What are my treatment options?
4. What are the risks and side effects of this treatment?
5. What happens if I don't do anything about this diagnosis?
6. I'd like to check up on my general health regularly. When do I need my next general check-up?



### Consider this:

- Find support through help groups.
- If your doctor prescribes medication, take it exactly as prescribed to get the maximum benefits.
- Medication for anxiety disorders, however, may not start working immediately. Attend the follow-up appointments that your doctor gives you so that he can monitor your response.

You will also learn to understand how your thinking patterns contribute to symptoms, and how to change your thoughts. This awareness of thinking patterns is combined with other behavioural techniques to help people confront their feared situations.

## HEALTHY FOOD STARTS WITH YOU SAVE TIME AND MONEY WITH A HEALTHIER DIET



**MYTH:** Healthy eating is more expensive.

**FACT:** In the long run, junk food is more expensive and bad for your health.

### OBESEITY IN SA



**2/3 OF WOMEN and 1/3 OF ALL MEN are OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE.**

This leads to:

**Diabetes**

**Hypertension**

Fact is, most cases can be prevented through modifiable life choices like diet and exercise. Starting a healthy diet could benefit your health and that of your family immensely.



## 5 SEASONAL FOODS ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

ITEM	WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH IT	BENEFITS
Onions 	Use sautéed onions as a flavouring for soups, stews and sauces.	Onions contain dietary fibre and prebiotics, nutrients that are used by the beneficial bacteria in our digestive systems.
Butternut 	Ideal for soups and stews. Roasted spiced cubes transform a salad into a meal.  <b>Recipe: dipping sauce</b> Blend 2 cups of roasted butternut with 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese.	Butternut is a medium starch veg, ideal to replace potato, pasta or rice for a reduced carb meal.
Spinach 	Spinach grows like weeds in most gardens. Grow and pick your own baby spinach regularly for salads, stir-fries and soups.  <b>Recipe: homemade pesto</b> In a food processor, combine a handful of fresh basil leaves, 2 cups spinach, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, 1/2 cup olive (or canola) oil, salt and pepper to taste.	Spinach is packed with minerals like magnesium and iron, which are important for muscle and energy metabolism.
Lentils (dried) 	Only 20 minutes cooking time, or 10 if they're pre-soaked!  Add to: • Lasagne or spaghetti bolognese. • Soups for extra protein and texture.	Dietary fibre for digestive health. Low-GI food, ideal for blood glucose control. Plant source of protein.
Chickpeas (tinned) 	Chickpeas transform a regular salad into a tasty, filling meal.  Add to: • Stews: instead of potato. • Stir-fries: they serve as a chunky texture to replace meat or chicken.  <b>Recipe: homemade hummus</b> Blend one drained tin of chickpeas in a food processor with 3 tablespoons of plant oil (olive or canola), 2 cloves garlic, juice from 1 lemon and salt and pepper to taste.	Rich in dietary fibre for digestive health. Intermediate GI food. Plant source of protein.

## MAKE YOUR MONEY AND FOOD GO FURTHER



**Maximise your meals** by combining ingredients. For example, double up a portion of hummus by blending with an equal portion of plain yoghurt.



**Use special ingredients sparingly.** Feta, for instance, doesn't need to be chopped into blocks, but can be crumbled instead. It's a naturally salty cheese so you need very little.



**Shop for low-GI foods** which keep you fuller for longer and have benefits for your glucose and cholesterol levels.



**Seasonal produce is always better priced,** as the produce is not imported and not stored for long periods, which adds to cost. Fruit and veggies that are freshly picked in their season taste better too.