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YOUR CARE

NEWSLETTER

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'Being healthy and fit is not a trend or a fad, it is a lifestyle.'
- Unknown

Dear Member

Quitting smoking is never easy, but it is more important than ever. Smoking impacts on your health and pocket. We share a handy guide on how you could finally quit smoking.

Also featured in this month's edition:

- We explain how you can **eat for a stronger immune system** by planning meals that include immune-boosting foods.
- We share guidelines on how you can stick to your treatment plan in order to **take control of your health condition** – specifically those "silent killers" that often do not have signs or symptoms until there are significant health consequences.
- Lastly, we highlight why **women are more susceptible to poor health**, including developing diabetes. We also share tips on how women can look after their family, by looking after their own health.

Enjoy the read!


POLMED YOUR CARE Support Team



Smoking impacts your health and pocket

Smoking is an expensive habit – for your health, your family's health and your finances. What reason could you possibly have not to quit?

[Read more ...](#)



Take control of that silent killer

Stick to your treatment plan – it's crucial to take your medication as prescribed, possibly for the rest of your life. Even if you don't feel sick, you still need to take your medication.

[Read more ...](#)



Eating for a stronger immune system

One of the best ways to boost and maintain a strong immune system, is through the food you eat. Plan your meals to include immune-boosting foods, such as those in our infographic.

[Read more ...](#)



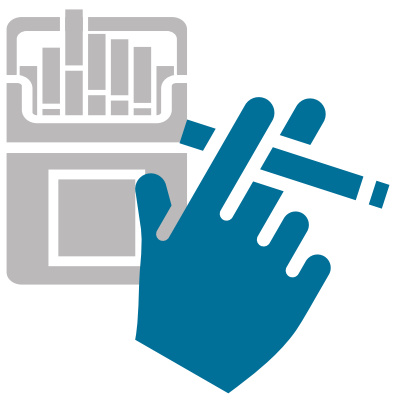
The role of women in improving healthcare

Today, most women juggle working, caring for the family and running their homes. These stresses can make women more susceptible to poor health. Make no mistake, diabetes affects women too.

[Read more ...](#)

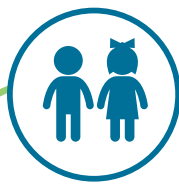


> QUITTING SMOKING IS NEVER EASY BUT HERE'S WHY IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER



The smoking rates in South Africa have decreased. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa, this is in part due to legislation and taxation.

However South Africans are still lighting up. Recent statistics show that almost 8 million people smoke each year.



According to the South African Global Youth Tobacco Survey, if you as parents smoke, your child is likely to start as well.

SMOKING IMPACTS YOUR HEALTH

“Smoking increases your risk for heart attacks and stroke, lung cancer, pneumonia and emphysema – and doubles your risk of tuberculosis. About 50% of smokers will die early; 14 years earlier on average.”

– Professor Richard van Zyl-Smit from the Lung Institute.



SMOKING ALSO IMPACTS YOUR POCKET

“The financial benefits of quitting come from direct and indirect savings. A packet a day amounts to R12 000 per year. The cost savings from averting pneumonia, developmental delays, heart disease, emphysema, and early retirement are far greater.”

– CANSA



3 QUICK BENEFITS OF QUITTING

Here's how your body thanks you:

- 1 hour later:** Your heart rate returns to normal, and blood pressure begins to drop.
- 12 hours later:** Your body starts to cleanse itself of the excess carbon monoxide from cigarettes. Your body's oxygen levels will start to increase.
- 1 day later:** Great news! Your body is already fighting back; your risk of a heart attack has dropped.



GOAL SETTING TO STOP

There are many programmes to help you stop smoking. These range from patches to step-by-step coaching (*for example Narcotics Anonymous*). It's also possible to do it yourself. Try the **Action Plan** approach:



Make sure your goal is action specific by asking yourself the following: What, how much, when and how often.



If you chose to gradually smoke less until you stop completely, then you should decide how many cigarettes you'll cut down on each day, when you'll start cutting back and how often you'll be cutting back per week.



Remember to make your goal realistic. Don't expect to quit smoking completely after one week.



On a scale from 1-10, rate how likely you think it is that you will achieve the goal (10 being very likely). Make the goal easier if it rates below 5 and make it more challenging if you rate it 9 out of 10.



Assess your success weekly and adjust your goal accordingly.

GOOD TO KNOW

Have a back-up plan for your “triggers”. If you automatically reach for a cigarette after supper, plan an activity for that time. Go for a walk or play a game on your phone.



THE HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION SOUTH AFRICA

ABOUT THE HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION SA

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) plays a leading role in the fight against preventable heart disease and stroke, with the aim of seeing fewer people in South Africa suffer premature deaths and disabilities. The HSFSA, established in 1980, is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation that relies on external funding to sustain the work it carries out.

The HSFSA aims to reduce the cardiovascular disease (CVD) burden in South Africa and ultimately on the healthcare system of South Africa. HSFSA's mission is to empower people in South Africa to adopt healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices easier, seek appropriate care and encourage prevention.

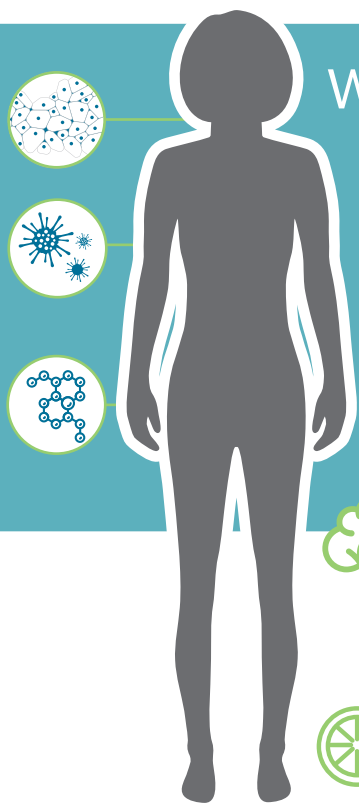


EATING FOR A STRONGER IMMUNE SYSTEM BUMP UP YOUR NUTRITION FOR A STRONGER YOU

We eat to live, right? So, why then do we take in so much of the bad stuff? We know enough now to realise that food can help fight against many health conditions and build a stronger immune system.



WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM WHEN YOU AGE



- The cells and proteins that help maintain a healthy immune system change.
- Bacteria, cancer cells and other substances become more difficult to destroy, possibly contributing to the increased incidence of cancer among the elderly.
- The stress response diminishes. The hormones that regulate the stress response such as cortisol, adrenaline and possibly prolactin, are reduced.

FOOD TO THE RESCUE

One of the best ways to boost and maintain a strong immune system, no matter your age, is through the food you eat.

Endocrinologist Dr Sundeep Ruder advises that a diet of fruit and vegetables that is low in refined sugar and processed food is the first line in maintaining a healthy immune system.



You can also boost your immune system by keeping alcohol intake to a minimum, quitting smoking and getting enough sleep.

NUTRIENT-DENSE FOOD CAN:

- Help you maintain a healthy weight.
- Prevent the development of conditions like diabetes, heart disease and muscle weakness.
- Assist in healing, recovering and maintaining strong bones and good skin elasticity.



IMMUNE-BOOSTING FOODS

Use this table to help you make conscious choices when it comes to your food:

Food Source	Minerals and Vitamins	Benefits
Grapefruit, lemon, oranges and naartjies	Vitamin C	Fights off colds and flus.
Broccoli	Vitamin A, C and E Also contains fibre and antioxidants.	Builds collagen and it is great for bone health.
Spinach	Potassium, manganese, zinc, magnesium, iron, calcium, folate, niacin and vitamins A, B6, C and K.	Improves eyesight, strengthens muscles, maintains blood pressure and more.
Green tea	Antioxidants	Helps keep inflammation in check, eliminates disease-causing free radicals and protects your cells against DNA damage.
Strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries	Vitamin C and folate	Supports a healthy urinary tract, improves memory and vision, and even lowers cholesterol.
Fatty fish including salmon and tuna	Omega-3 fatty acids	Helps control inflammation in the body.

GOOD TO KNOW

Cortisol is secreted by your body when you get stressed and this can create intense food cravings, especially for fats and carbohydrates. Counteract this response by following the right diet.

TAKE ACTION:

Eat regular, small healthy meals and keep fruit and veggies handy.

- Herbal teas help soothe your frazzled nerves.
- Unrefined carbohydrates, nuts and bananas boost the formation of serotonin, which is a “feel-good” neurotransmitter.
- Small amounts of protein containing the amino acid, tryptamine, can give you a boost when stress tires you out.





Take control of that silent killer

When it's ok to stop taking your medication.

The term “silent killer” describes a health condition that may progress to a very advanced stage before manifesting itself clinically. Therefore, it often has no obvious signs or symptoms until there's significant organ damage. Examples include high blood pressure (hypertension), hardening of the arteries, and certain types of cancers.

One of the most common silent killers is hypertension. Left undiagnosed and untreated, hypertension can cause serious damage – it's one of the leading causes of heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, dementia and premature death.

Many of us aren't even aware we suffer from these life-threatening conditions. Research shows that among South African adults with hypertension, 48% are untested and undiagnosed, 23% are tested but undiagnosed, 5% are diagnosed but untreated, 13% are treated but not controlled, and only 8% are controlled. This means that an alarming 91% of hypertensive South Africans are not controlling their condition.

One of these reasons is mental illness. A mental illness could mean you're less likely to get help for your chronic condition, and symptoms may affect whether you follow your treatment plan. Research shows that the odds of not sticking to a treatment are three times higher for depressed people.

Lack of energy, motivation, social withdrawal, feelings of hopelessness, and changes in cognition and expectations about the pros and cons of treatment all have an effect.

According to Professor Brian Rayner, nephrologist and director of the Hypertension Clinic, memory problems in older people often interfere with treatment adherence.

Stick to your treatment plan

It's crucial to take your medication as prescribed, possibly for the rest of your life. Even if you don't feel sick, you still need to take your medication. The only time you should stop taking your medication is if your doctor says that you can. If you think your medication isn't working or if you're experiencing any side effects, ask your doctor about an alternative.

- Talk to your doctor about using combination, long-acting or once-a-day medications to make things easy.
- Write down exactly how you should take your medication and keep these notes on you.
- Place your pills next to your toothbrush as a reminder.
- Consider a weekly pillbox, and ask a caregiver to pack and check it for you.
- Set reminders on your phone to take your medication at the same time every day.
- Be mindful of taking medication over weekends, when your routine may differ.
- If you're travelling, always pack your medication first.
- If you're unsure about taking your medication, or experience side-effects, talk to your doctor. Never just stop taking your medication!



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The role of women in improving healthcare

Diabetes affects women, too

Today, most women juggle working, caring for the family and running their homes. These stresses can make women more susceptible to poor health.

The International Diabetes Federation announced that the 2018-2019 World Diabetes Day theme will be “The Family and Diabetes”. The theme aims to raise awareness about the impact of diabetes on family life. As women play such a big role in family life, it’s important to highlight how important taking care of their health status is.

A survey by *Healthy Women and Working Mother Magazine* revealed that women ranked how they manage healthcare in order of: children, pets, elder relatives, spouses or significant others, and at the bottom of their list, themselves.

Diabetes in women

More than 13 million women globally have diabetes. Diabetes can cause serious health problems, including heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, pregnancy complications and blindness.

Diabetes can increase the risk of heart disease in women due to the adverse changes that comes with it. Your blood pressure rises, HDL (good) cholesterol decreases, and abdominal fat is increased. Although men experience similar changes when diagnosed with diabetes, it is not to the same extent that women do. Besides heart disease, diabetes can cause tiredness, stomach pain, vomiting, harm your eyesight, make digestion difficult and increase the risk of stroke.

Gestational diabetes only affects women as it develops during pregnancy. It occurs in approximately 4% of all pregnancies. It often occurs in women who have had no history of diabetes. Gestational diabetes affects both mom and baby in different ways. With proper care, women diagnosed with gestational diabetes can deliver healthy babies.

However, if the mother experiences persistent high levels of glucose throughout pregnancy, the foetus will also have high glucose levels. For newborns, there’s also the increased risk of conditions like jaundice and respiratory distress syndrome. On the other hand, women with gestational diabetes are more likely to need a C-section (Caesarean birth), due to the larger size of the baby.

More than **13 million** women globally have **diabetes**.

Look after your family by looking after yourself

1. Maintain a healthy weight

Being overweight is a diabetes risk factor. Work together as a family to reach your healthy weight loss goals. Eat a balanced diet and exercise at least three times a week. Exclude foods high in fat, sugar and calories, and eat plenty of wholegrains, fruits and vegetables. Keep your kitchen well-stocked with nuts, plain yoghurt, trail mix and fruit.

2. Watch less TV

Involve your family in planning outdoor activities to avoid spending too much time in front of the TV. Go for walks, bike rides and even play games.

3. No smoking!

Smoking increases the risk of diabetes, and harms your lungs.

4. Talk to your doctor

Go for regular check-ups to make sure that your health is in order. Ask your doctor if you have any concerns.



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