



POLMED®
OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

YOUR CARE

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2018



Wishing you
and your loved
ones a joyous
festive season
and a happy
New Year

Dear Member

The holiday season is upon us. For some, this season – with its busyness, family events, activities and financial stresses – can be a challenging time of year. Our main feature focuses on year-end stress, and **how to keep your mind healthy** ahead of the holidays.

Also featured this month:

- We illustrate **how to read food labels** so you can make healthy food choices this holiday season.
- We explore research findings on the significant impact of **family support when it comes to managing diabetes**.
- We explain why it's essential to **stick to your treatment plan if you're living with HIV**. HIV is not a death sentence, but you do need to make an effort to stay healthy over time.

Stay informed and enjoy the holidays! Till next year ...

POLMED YOUR CARE Support Team



Manage your mental health

The end of the year can bring stress and anxiety. Keep your mind healthy by easing up on the drinks, staying away from 'moody' foods and reversing negative thoughts.

[Read more ...](#)



The family and diabetes

Studies have shown that people living with diabetes are more likely to have better control over their blood sugar if they have good family support.

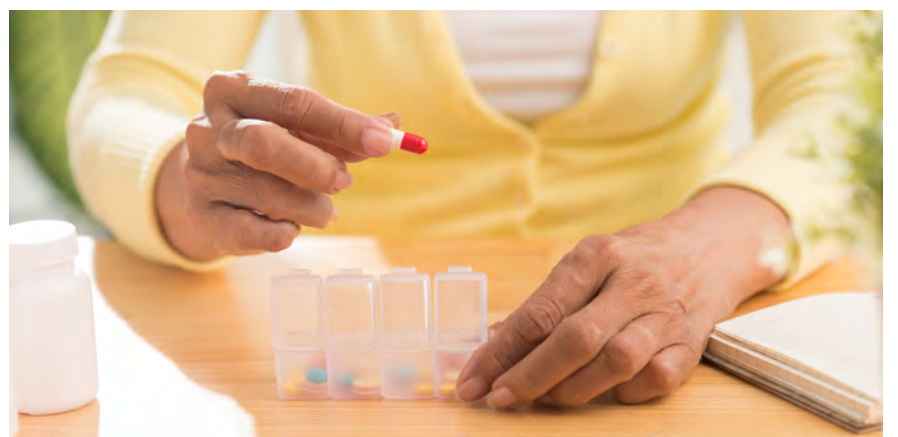
[Read more ...](#)



How to read food labels

Don't rely on the claims on food packaging. When you know how to decode the language on food labels, you can make good choices and do your health a great service.

[Read more ...](#)



Managing HIV

Managing HIV involves the same dedication as managing other chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

[Read more ...](#)

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please call POLMED on 0860 765 633 (select the option for the Disease Management Programme),
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> **MANAGE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH**

THE END OF THE YEAR CAN BRING STRESS – HERE’S HOW TO KEEP YOUR MIND HEALTHY.

For some, the holiday season can be challenging, especially if you suffer from depression and anxiety. This season, with its busyness, family events, activities and money stresses can exacerbate those conditions.

Excessively drinking alcohol, overeating, insomnia and headaches are possible consequences of holiday depression.



HOW DO YOU KEEP YOUR MIND HEALTHY AND WELL?



Ease up on the drinks

It may be the season for indulging, but alcohol in excess can seriously impact your mental wellbeing. A study by the University of Chicago found that alcohol can stimulate the production of the same hormones that the body creates when it’s under stress. You may turn to drinking to soothe your anxiety, but you may just be adding to it. In addition, like caffeine, alcohol is also dehydrating and can interfere with sleep.



Stay away from moody foods

Feeling down, moody or sad? Sugary, refined foods can lead to fluctuations in blood sugar and insulin levels – making you irritable, stressed and snappy. Pair that with salty, greasy food and you feel bloated and puffy too. Even worse, excess sodium may ‘up’ your blood pressure! Stick to healthy wholegrains, slow-release carbs and plenty of protein.



Food tricks to ‘up’ your happy factor:

1. Dark chocolate (just a few squares!) has been shown to reduce stress hormones.
2. Studies show that if you’re running low on the mineral selenium, you will have an increase in irritability, fatigue and anxiety. Remedy this fast with a handful of Brazil nuts.
3. People with an Omega-3 deficiency may be more vulnerable to depression. Add oily fish to your diet. Salmon, mackerel and sardines are packed with Omega-3 to keep your brain healthy and your mood stable.



Reverse the negativity

Dr Manuel Zane, founder of the Phobia Clinic in New York, suggests that you should allow the stressful feeling to come to you. For example, if you are worried about not having enough money to buy gifts, allow the thought to surface, *“Yes, I may not be able to afford gifts for everyone.”* Now, shift the thought to something real. *“That’s okay. I’m sure my friends will understand.”* Or, *“Maybe I can bake biscuits as a gift instead.”*



Do the following self-assessment to determine if your emotional wellbeing is at risk:

When you feel depressed or down:

- Do you eat more or less than usual?
- Do you struggle to fall asleep?
- Do you have little energy and often feel tired?
- Do you have low self-esteem?
- Do you struggle to concentrate?
- Do you find it difficult to make decisions?
- Do you feel hopeless and demotivated?



If you’ve answered yes to more than three of these questions, speak to your doctor about your low mood. He will be able to assess your feelings and find a way of treating your condition, so you can get back to having a good quality of life.

References:

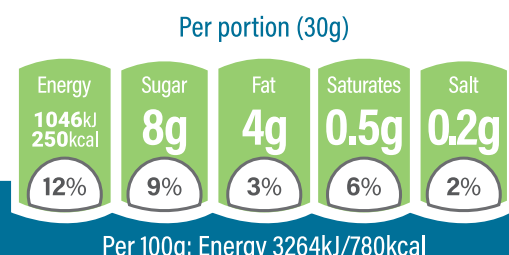
1. *The Doctors Book of Home Remedies*
2. *The Teacher's Ultimate Stress Mastery Guide*
3. www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-facts/health-effects-of-alcohol/lifestyle/alcohol-a-cure-for-stress/
4. dujs.dartmouth.edu/2011/02/you-are-what-you-eat-how-food-affects-your-mood/#.WvAnb4iFM2w
5. www.drweil.com/health-wellness/body-mind-spirit/stress-anxiety/breathing-three-exercises/



KNOW HOW TO READ YOUR FOOD LABELS YOU'LL BE DOING YOUR HEALTH A FAVOUR

FAT FREE

It says “fat-free”
on the front of the
box, so it must be
true, right?



Not necessarily. Don't rely on the big and bold claims on the front packaging of food items. When you know how to decode the language on food labels, you will be doing your health a great service.

HOW TO READ FOOD LABELS

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (300g)
Servings Per Container 6

Amount Per Serving

Calories 358 **Calories from Fat 90**

% Daily Value

Total Fat 5% 15 %

Saturated Fat 1.7% 25 %

Trans Fat 1% 5 %

Cholesterol 50mg 29%

Sodium 300mg 17%

Total Carbohydrate 10g 11%

Dietary Fiber 2g 5 %

Sugars 3g

Protein 10%

Vitamin A 1% **Vitamin C 3%**

Calcium 3% **Iron 1%**

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Start at the top of the label. The listed ingredients are named in order of the largest quantity or amount first. This means that the ingredient that makes up most of your food is listed first. The list will also indicate what the portion size or serving for that food should be, as well as the energy or calorie amount from a single serving.

Also listed: protein, carbohydrates, fats, fibre and sodium content. Following this is information on the types of vitamins and minerals present.

Be sure to check the amount of sugar and types of fats in the item too. By assessing these, you can help protect your family against the potential risks of chronic conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular conditions.

MAKE GOOD CHOICES

Compare and contrast food items according to their labels.

Focus on fibre, Vitamin A and C, iron and calcium – and lose the foods that have high amounts of saturated and trans fats, cholesterol and sodium. These substances increase your risk for chronic conditions like high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Trans and saturated fats are most often found in fatty processed meat, chicken skin, butter, ghee, biscuits and pastries.

You should also be checking the labels on beverages. Sugary drinks are energy-dense (high in kilojoules) but low in nutrition. Fruit is packed with sugar, but whole, fresh fruit contains fibre too. Eating whole fruit makes you feel fuller, which means you are less likely to eat too much of it.

When analysing the label, also take into consideration the serving size. You may think that 10 grams of fat is a good deal for that snack – but make sure you are reading it correctly. It may only be 10 grams in total for one serving of the snack, not the whole thing! Most food items, especially packaged goods, contain more than one serving. Do the same with calorie counts – again, this is often listed per serving size so be careful.



SPOT THE HIDDEN SUBSTANCES

You may not see “sugar” or “salt” on that seemingly-healthy product list – but these substances could be hiding under different names.



ALTERNATIVE NAMES FOR SUGAR

Barley malt, beet sugar, cane sugar, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, high fructose corn syrup, malt syrup, maple syrup, fructose sweetener, liquid fructose, honey, molasses, dextrose and dextrin.



ALTERNATIVE NAMES FOR FAT

Vegetable fats, hydrogenated fats, lard, shortening, coconut oil or palm kernel oil.



ALTERNATIVE NAMES FOR SALT

Brine, sodium nitrite, sodium benzoate, monosodium glutamate or MSG.

References:

1. www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition/ucm274593.htm
2. www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-based-dietary-guidelines/regions/countries/south-africa/en/



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The family and diabetes

Take care of yourself and your family.

You don't have to face diabetes alone. Your family could be the support system you need.

According to the International Diabetes Federation, World Diabetes Day for 2018/2019 will focus on family and diabetes. This health issue affects over 400 million people around the world, and according to the World Health Organization, this number has quadrupled since 1980. There are more than 16 million people in Africa alone living with this condition.

Different studies have shown that those living with either type of diabetes who have good support systems are more likely to have better control over their blood sugar.

When you have diabetes, your life changes and you're likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and frustration. Your family and friends may also struggle with stress and anxiety.

A study by the University of Chicago found that your family's attitude can have a significant impact on your psychological wellbeing, decision to follow recommendations for medical treatment, and the ability to maintain changes in diet and exercise.

If you have diabetes, your siblings and children may have a strong genetic risk for the disease.

Inform your family and friends about the common risk factors and symptoms of the disease:

- Excessive thirst.
- Weight loss.
- Excessive urination.
- Tiredness.
- Blurred vision.
- Extreme hunger.

These symptoms may come on suddenly and develop over a few days.

If you have diabetes, your siblings and children may have a strong genetic risk for the disease

Risk factors include:

- Obesity.
- Lack of exercise.
- An abnormal lipid profile.
- A family history of the disease.

Get the family involved!

Type 1 diabetes is not reversible, while Type 2 diabetes is. Fortunately, if you follow your treatment plan and take care of yourself with the help of your loved ones, it can be manageable. Getting your family involved in your lifestyle changes benefits your own treatment plan, and puts them on a preventive path.

Eat together

It's easier sharing meals with your family than sticking to your own diet and feeling isolated. Introduce new eating habits for the whole family. Avoid takeaways for dinner and plan your meals. Keep unhealthy foods out of the house completely, and get the kids involved with meal planning and grocery shopping.

Choose good food:

- Wholegrains and items made with wholegrains with little or no added sugar.
- Fresh veggies, lightly steamed, roasted, grilled, or eaten raw.
- Fresh fruit.
- Chicken and other poultry.
- Eggs and low-fat dairy.
- Natural sources of vegetable fats, like nuts, seeds, or avocados (high in calories, so keep portions small).
- Water, unflavoured or flavoured sparkling water.
- Unsweetened tea (add a slice of lemon).
- Black coffee.



Get moving

Physical activity with a healthy diet, and medication, all work together in keeping your blood glucose in your target range. According to the Doctors Book of Home Remedies, the best exercise for diabetics is brisk walking. It improves the efficiency of every unit of insulin taken in or produced by the body.

Start slowly, especially if the family isn't used to regular exercise. Check with your doctor about the exercise that will work best for you. Let your family know that being physically active can help you:

- prevent or delay diabetes problems.
- keep your blood glucose level, blood pressure, and cholesterol balanced.
- lose weight or stay at a healthy weight.
- get more energy.

References:

1. <https://www.thediabetescouncil.com/can-diabetes-affect-friends-family-others-around/>
2. <https://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/about-diabetes/diabetes-basics/type-2-diabetes-and-a-healthy-family-lifestyle/>
3. <http://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/diabetes>
4. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/diet-eating-physical-activity>
5. <https://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com/about-diabetes/diabetes-basics/type-2-diabetes-and-a-healthy-family-lifestyle/>
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8. Prevention Magazine Editors. *The Doctors Book of Home Remedies (2001)*. South Africa: Rodale Press/ Jacklin Publishers

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Managing HIV as a chronic condition

Are you HIV positive? Sticking to your treatment plan is essential.

A long and productive life with HIV is possible if you follow your doctor's treatment plan. HIV is not a death sentence, but you do need to make an effort to stay healthy over time. Managing HIV involves the same dedication as managing other chronic conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure.

Taking your medication as your doctor prescribed is vital once you know you've been infected with the HI virus. There currently is no cure for HIV, and the virus will remain in your body for life, so the medication helps you keep it under control.

HIV medication is known as antiretroviral treatment or ART. It also plays the role of preventing onward transmission of HIV. In other words, if you're HIV-positive and taking your ART as prescribed, there's a lower risk of you transmitting the disease to others.

If you don't take your medication, the virus will continue to multiply. It will also attack and destroy your CD4 cells. These cells protect you against infections. As a result, you may start getting opportunistic infections – so called because the bacteria, viruses and fungi that cause them take advantage of a weakened immune system. These infections may eventually become life-threatening.

ART helps to:

- consistently suppress your viral load (i.e. the concentration of HIV in your blood).
- keep your immune system strong.
- reduce your risk of opportunistic infections.
- improve your quality of life and make you live as long as possible.
- prevent you from passing the virus on to others.

For your medication to do its job properly, you must take it for the rest of your life.

ART helps to
keep your
immune system
strong

Medication tips

- Remember, your tablets must be taken at the correct times of the day, or they might not work properly. Write down exactly how you should take your medication to help you remember. (Example: some need to be taken with a meal, or after a meal).
- Place your pills next to your toothbrush as a reminder. You probably won't forget to brush your teeth!
- Set daily reminders on your phone to take your medication at the same time every day. This is particularly useful on weekends, when your routine might be slightly different.
- If you don't have a phone, tell someone you trust that you're on ART. Ask them to help you remember to take your medication.
- Set prompts to ensure you fetch your medication from the pharmacy before your batch runs out. Some pharmacies offer a chronic medication delivery service.
- Going away for the holidays? Pack your medication first!
- If you're unsure about taking your medication or experience any side-effects, tell your doctor or clinic nurse. Never just stop taking your medication.
- Don't ever skip a clinic or doctor's visit, and try to go to the same place every time. The staff will keep a medical record, helping you track your progress over time.

References:

1. Information supplied by Dr Pooja Balani, Medical Technical Advisor at the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society.
2. Information reviewed by Dr Tabie Greyling, Physician at Netcare Christiaan Barnard Hospital, Cape Town.

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