



POLMED
OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

YOUR CARE

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2018



People don't notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy.
- Anton Chekhov

Dear Member

With mid-year approaching, we hope you're well on your way to a healthier you!

If you suffer from diabetes, it's important to follow your doctor's orders on when and how to take your medication. Our main feature illustrates **why compliance to your medication schedule is crucial**, and how to fix common 'medication mistakes'.

Being inactive poses many health risks, so be sure to read our features on exercise. We bring you **exercise ideas for a healthier heart**, and explain why **exercising for your back** is easier than you think.

We also explore the dangers of alcohol, especially for chronic condition sufferers. **Alcohol affects more than just your liver** – it can affect your overall health and wellbeing.

Enjoy the read!

POLMED YOUR CARE Support Team



Take your diabetes medication

Living with diabetes requires constant attention to diet, exercise and glucose monitoring. But compliance to your medication schedule is just as important.

[Read more ...](#)



Exercise for a healthier heart

Regular exercise reduces your risk of a heart attack. The good news is you only need 10 minutes, three times a day, to exercise for a healthier heart.

[Read more ...](#)



Alcohol affects more than your liver

Excessive drinking can affect your overall health and wellbeing, and for chronic condition sufferers, the damage can be devastating.

[Read more ...](#)



Exercises that can save your back

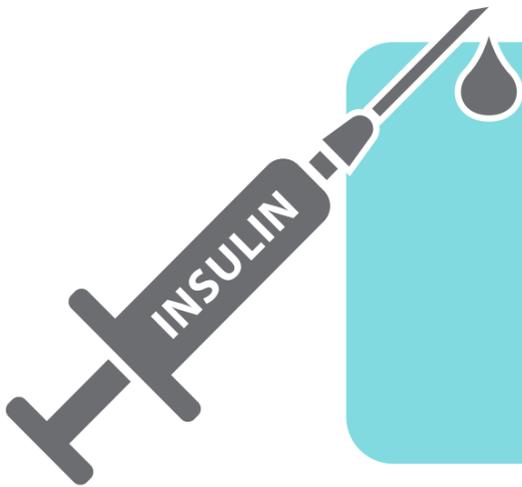
Does your back hurt? No need to carve out hours a day for a strenuous workout; back-strengthening exercises can be done quickly and easily.

[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 with your membership number and contact details.



> **DIABETES:** WHY YOU SHOULD ALWAYS TAKE YOUR MEDICATION



LIVING WITH DIABETES REQUIRES CONSTANT ATTENTION TO:

- Diet
- Exercise
- Glucose monitoring
- **and medication**



COMPLIANCE TO YOUR MEDICATION SCHEDULE IS CRUCIAL



Taking your medication is known as compliance – following your doctor's orders on when and how to take your medication.



RISKS OF NON-COMPLIANCE

Uncontrolled blood sugar levels as a result of not taking your medication can lead to:

- **Heart and blood vessel disease**
- **Nerve damage**
- **Kidney damage**
- **Eye disease**
- **Skin disease**

COMMON MEDICATION MISTAKES... AND HOW TO FIX THEM



"I feel better, so I'll stop my medication"

Wrong! The medication used to manage your blood glucose doesn't reverse the diabetes. So, even if you feel better for a day or two, you still need the medication for the long term.



"I forgot!"

- Set a daily alarm reminder on your cellphone.
- Keep your medication in a very visible place.
- Keep a calendar on your fridge with your refill dates marked clearly.
- Ask friends to text you reminders.



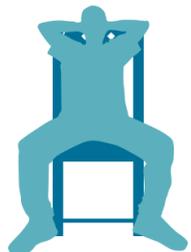
"I feel worse after taking the medication"

Make a note of the regular effects, and when it's most common. Share it with your doctor who can then help you to formulate the best solution.

EXERCISE FOR A HEALTHIER HEART

DID YOU KNOW...

Up to **40% of all deaths in SA** are due to non-communicable diseases, such as **heart attacks** and **strokes**?



Being inactive...

- is as dangerous as smoking
- worsens and accelerates major diseases

The good news

All you need is 10 minutes, 3 times per day!



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU EXERCISE REGULARLY?



Improved heart muscle



Better blood flow



Blood vessels are under less stress



Reduced risk of a heart attack

EXERCISE IDEAS FOR A HEALTHY HEART

Walking

- reduces risk of heart attacks by up to 20%
- improves blood pressure
- tones your muscles.

Sneak in snippets of exercise

- When you go to the bathroom, walk up or down an extra flight of stairs.
- Park far away from the shopping centre.



Household chores

Household chores	Calories burned
Ironing	Approximately 125 calories per hour
Mowing the grass	Approximately 160 calories per hour
Cleaning windows	Approximately 150 calories per hour
Light cleaning (dusting, sweeping, etc)	Approximately 170 calories per hour

UPPING THE INTENSITY:



- Increase your duration by just five minutes. If you walk, swim, cycle or jog for 20 minutes, add five minutes every week.
- If you walk on flat roads, challenge yourself with a small steep road tomorrow. In a few days, try a hill.
- Once you're comfortable, carry light weights or a small weighted backpack.
- Challenge yourself to walk or run at a faster speed on the sand at the beach. This takes a lot more effort!



Alcohol affects more than your liver

Excessive drinking can affect your overall health and wellbeing.

The downside of alcohol

Alcohol is made when yeast is used to ferment carbohydrates, turning the sugars into energy and two waste products; ethanol and carbon dioxide. The fermented product is used in its whole form or distilled to produce spirits. It enters the bloodstream via the stomach and is distributed throughout the body, affecting the brain and other organs.

For chronic condition sufferers, the damage can be devastating:

- If you're diabetic, the high sugar content in drinks can spike your blood sugar levels.
- For those with liver disorders, heavy drinking can cause liver inflammation. Eventually, alcohol metabolism permanently changes the liver cell structure, damaging the liver's ability to process fats.
- Alcohol intake can lead to high blood pressure and heart muscle damage, raising the risk of heart failure or stroke.
- Drinking can damage the stomach lining, causing gastritis and ulcers.

Other dangers include:

- **Impaired immune system**
Poor nutrition damages the body's immune system, leaving it susceptible to infections.
- **Cognitive dysfunction**
Alcohol abuse damages the brain and can result in cerebral atrophy (loss of brain cells), neuropathy (nerve diseases), dementia and memory disorders, dysfunctional brain chemistry and poor blood supply to the brain.
- **Fertility problems**
Excess alcohol over years can cause erectile dysfunction, testicular atrophy and impotence. In women, it can interrupt menstruation.
- **Malnutrition and loss of nutrients**
Alcohol leads to the elimination of important vitamins and minerals that your body needs to fight infection and handle stress.
- **Weight gain**
Alcohol is often overlooked as a source of calories (one glass of wine/half a beer = five teaspoons of butter). It's virtually impossible to try to lose weight while drinking. Alcohol disrupts the body's balance of nutrients, fluids and hormones – and the vital body functions needed for fat loss. Alcohol blocks the body from burning fat and accessing fat for energy.

Are you drinking too much?

Ask yourself (**CAGE** questionnaire):

- Do I ever feel a need to **C**ut down on my drinking?
- Have people **A**nnoyed me by criticising or showing concern about my drinking?
- Do I ever feel **G**uilty or bad about drinking?
- Do I have to drink **E**arly in the morning (**E**ye-opener) to steady my nerves?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you should think about cutting down or quitting.



Treatment

A professional rehabilitation programme, with medical supervision and counselling, can help you tackle alcoholism.

Daily tips for staying healthy and sober:

- Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for support.
- Eat a range of healthy food and get regular exercise to boost your endorphins.
- Get enough sleep each night and do your best to manage stress.
- Avoid people, places and activities that trigger a craving to drink.
- Your doctor may recommend medication to help you stay sober.
- Establish clear, realistic goals: decide how much you can drink, and when.
- Remove alcohol from your home and work space.
- Drink slowly; pause between drinks. Drink non-alcoholic liquids and eat while taking in alcohol.

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1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28646566>
2. <https://www.addictionsandrecovery.org/addiction-self-test.htm>
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/standard/chemistry/plasticsandothermaterials/carbohydrates/revision/6/>
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Exercises that can save your back

Does your back hurt? Most people complain of back pain at some point. This is because our lower back bears the weight of the upper body.

Sitting at a desk, not exercising enough and poor posture all contribute to back pain.

Aerobic exercise, strength training, flexibility and good posture can relieve back pain. Research reveals that regular exercise reduces stiffness in the connective fibres and keeps the tendons flexible. Exercise also keeps your discs 'spongy' by reducing the swelling in soft tissues. When you don't exercise, the swelling in these soft tissues may increase.

The good news is that exercising for your back is simpler than you think! No need to carve out hours a day for a strenuous workout; back-strengthening exercises can be done quickly and easily.

Stretch it out

Whatever your current workout, add a few minutes for stretches. Stretching improves flexibility, which improves your posture, and a good posture is essential for a strong and healthy back. Try a yoga stretch such as the downward dog. Stand on a non-slip mat and bend over. Flatten your palms shoulder-width apart on the mat. Straighten your arms, pushing your palms down into the mat. Push your hips as far back as you can, creating a triangle shape from your hands to your hips. Don't tense your jaw! Try this exercise at the end of your day to help you relax.

Good posture is essential for a strong and healthy back

Get up from your screen every 30 minutes

A study by Temple University in America found that the average person spends nine hours hunched over a screen each day! That is a long time for your back to take strain. Stick a post-it note on your cubicle to remind you to take a break every 30 minutes.

Stomach in, shoulders back

Right now, in your chair, pull in your stomach muscles and straighten your shoulders. A strong core is vital for a strong back. In the car, place a cushion at your back to keep you upright instead of slumping forward.

Sort out your workspace

Is your computer at eye level? Does your chair offer good lumbar support? If not, place a rolled-up towel or cushion at the small of your back. Add height by placing your laptop on a stand so that you look straight at the screen.

Daily tips

- Set an hourly phone reminder to sit upright with feet placed firmly on the ground.
- Place a pillow under both knees when you sleep on your back. This little trick helps your spine stay in alignment and cushions your hips, reducing the stress on your joints.
- Before you get into bed, stretch out your back, neck and shoulders. Do the same when you wake up.



References

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