



To be healthy as a whole, mental wellness plays a role

Dear Member

Obesity in children is on the rise. For the first time in South Africa, more children are overweight and obese than undernourished and stunted – and it mostly comes down to poor nutrition. Read more in our main feature on **childhood obesity**, and find out what you can do to stop the cycle.

Our other features this month:

- October is Mental Health Awareness Month. **Take care of your mental health** by learning more about common mental disorders and the importance of treatment adherence.
- When exercising, it's important not to rush into your workout programme. We share useful tips on how to prepare for a **balanced, effective workout**.
- In our final feature, we explain how you can **maintain a healthy back and neck** with good 'ergonomics'.

Enjoy the read!

POLMED YOUR CARE Support Team



Obesity in children

With fast food and processed packed lunches, children are eating their way to obesity. Combat bad habits now for your child's continued wellbeing.

[Read more ...](#)



Exercise like a pro

Exercising isn't as easy as jumping on the treadmill. Your workout routine needs to include three essential elements for it to be balanced, safe and effective.

[Read more ...](#)



Take care of your mental health

Mental disorders are amongst the world's leading causes of health problems. Yet many people don't seek help, while others don't stick to their treatment plan.

[Read more ...](#)



Adjust your life to suit your back

Ergonomics is the process where environments (like workplaces) are designed so they are fit for people to use. If you often experience neck and back pain, ergonomics may be to blame.

[Read more ...](#)



Obesity in children

Combat bad habits now for your child's continued wellbeing.

Obesity in children is on the rise.

Inevitably, it mostly comes down to poor nutrition. With fast food and processed packed lunches, children are eating their way to obesity.

According to the *Healthy Active Kids South Africa Report Card (HAKSA) 2016*, for the first time in history, more children are overweight and obese than undernourished and stunted.

Childhood obesity can affect your child's physical health, social, and emotional wellbeing, and self-esteem. It's also associated with poor academic performance and a lower quality of life.

The long-term risks can spread to diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular and kidney diseases. Excess body weight is a huge problem. About 13% of South African children are overweight or obese; more than double the global average of 5%. According to researchers, there's a 70% chance of an overweight child being overweight as an adult.

Stop the cycle

Start early by ensuring that your child eats balanced meals. This is the most important step. Include more fruits and vegetables in their diet, and keep oily and fried foods to a minimum. Excessive sugar intake, big portion sizes, and very little physical activity play major roles in obesity.

Listen to your child

Don't insist your child eat more, or finish every single bite on their plate. Children who are pushed to eat more often ignore their bodies' signals, leading to overeating and weight problems. Offer your child realistic portions, and if they want more, they can ask. Teach your child to recognise hunger cues, and feelings of fullness. Young children are good at listening to their bodies. They eat when hungry, and stop when satisfied. When you try to control how much they eat, you interfere with this natural ability.

Breakfast is important

Be a role model at home, and start each day with a healthy breakfast. It helps children develop healthy eating habits, improves concentration and memory, and reduces hyperactivity. Breakfast helps kick-start your child's metabolism which helps in the absorption of nutrients. A nutritious breakfast is linked to better eating habits throughout the day.

Teach your child to recognise hunger cues, and feelings of fullness

Healthy meals

- Make fruit and vegetables a normal part of their diet. Serve a fruit or veggie at every meal.
- Serve lean meats and other healthy sources of protein. Choose eggs, fish, beans and nuts.
- Make it easy for your child to go for healthy snacks by stocking up at home. Other good snacks include low-fat yoghurt, peanut butter and celery, or wholegrain crackers and cheese. Make food fun, and switch up the varieties. This helps them look forward to something new which will encourage better eating.
- For more fibre, choose wholegrain breads and cereals.
- Grill, boil, roast and steam foods instead.
- Limit fast food and low-nutrient snacks, but don't completely ban fast foods and snacks. This will just make your kids want the unhealthy stuff more.
- Always offer water before a sugary drink. Add pieces of fruits to give the water a bit of taste.



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Take care of your mental health

Mental health and treatment adherence

According to the World Health Organization, one in four people globally will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lifetime, and 450 million people currently suffer from these conditions.

This puts mental disorders amongst the world's leading causes of health problems. Common mental disorders include PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), GAD (general anxiety disorder) and depression.

An estimated 300 million people globally suffer from depression, a disorder where you experience negative feelings like extreme sadness and a lack of interest in daily life. PTSD is a condition where you struggle to recover after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event.

With GAD, living with excessive worry about everything in your life is the main symptom. People with GAD anticipate that disasters will happen and are overly concerned with everyday things like family, work and other issues.

Nearly two-thirds of people with a mental disorder never seek help and approximately 75% of adults aren't receiving the necessary treatment.

Why people don't seek treatment

One of the most common reasons is if the patient sees an improvement in their symptoms or overall illness. This can make you think that you don't need treatment anymore. You should only stop taking medication when your doctor says you may, otherwise the symptoms will come back!

Not complying with your treatment plan may cause a relapse or harm your health. Researchers found that people treated for PTSD who took their medication for less than a year, were more likely to relapse than those who continued their medication even if they didn't have more symptoms.

Not taking your medication could also affect your loved ones, as your medication helps to manage your symptoms.

Only
stop taking
medication when
your doctor says
you may

Help at hand

Psychotherapy

Also known as 'talk treatment', this involves therapies to help with mental and emotional problems. It aims to help patients understand their feelings and the triggers of their disorder. It also helps you deal with different situations arising from a specific disorder. Therapy can last for a year or more, depending on the severity of your disorder.

Medication

There are different medications for specific disorders, including antidepressants, anti-anxiety medication, antipsychotics, mood stabilisers and stimulant medications.

Medication 101

- Set an alarm on your phone, watch or clock to remind you when it's time to take your medication.
- Invest in a pillbox that's marked with the days of the week to keep track of your medication dosages. Designate each slot for different days or times.
- Let your doctor or therapist know if you're having a bad reaction to your medication.
- Link your medication to your daily routine. For example, get into the habit of taking your medication straight after breakfast every day.



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MAKE SURE YOUR EXERCISE PROGRAMME IS BALANCED EXERCISE LIKE A PRO

So you're at the gym, ready to start working towards your fitness goals. But remember, it's important that you prepare first.

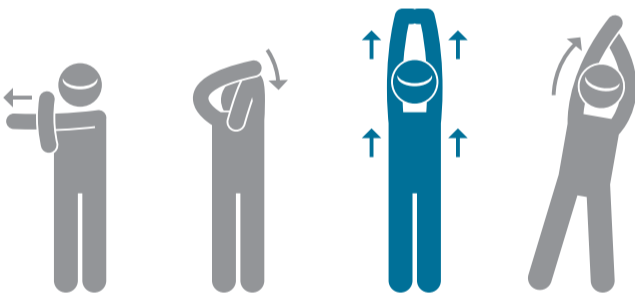
Exercising isn't as easy as jumping on the treadmill. Your workout routine needs to include three essential elements for it to be balanced, safe (risk of injury is lowered) and effective. These include aerobic exercise, resistance training and flexibility training. Other elements include strength training and anaerobic exercise.



Don't rush into any workout programme. Talk to your doctor or biokineticist before starting.

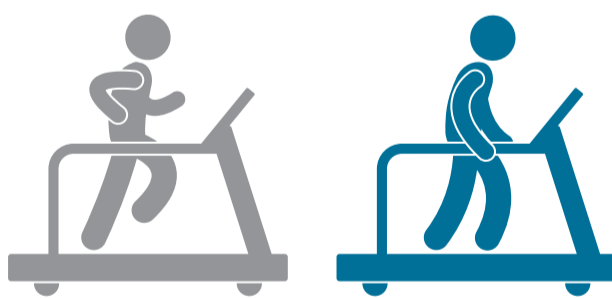
Exercise	Importance	Example	Notes
Aerobic 	Improves your cardiovascular system and helps with weight loss.	Running, walking, swimming, hiking and dancing.	Do 30 to 40 minutes of aerobic exercise for three to six days a week.
Flexibility 	Enhances your range of motion.	Stretches, yoga and pilates.	Do at least 10 to 15 minutes of flexibility exercise at least thrice a week.
Resistance 	Improves your muscle tone and endurance.	Free-weight exercises like dumbbell curls, barbell presses and squats with a kettle bell.	Do at least one set of eight to 12 reps three times a week with one rest day in-between. Work on all your muscle groups, including your shoulders, back, chest, core and glutes.
Anaerobic 	Increases strength, speed and power.	Weightlifting, squat jumps and sprinting.	Only do anaerobic exercises three times a week for a few seconds at a time.
Strength training 	Increases bone density, helps manage weight and increases metabolism.	Push-ups, squats, resistance bands and weightlifting.	At least 30 minutes two to three days a week. Use household items like soup tins for weights.

WARMING UP AND COOLING OFF



It's important to warm up before you begin and cool off when you're done. **Warming up increases blood flow and loosens up your muscles, which will reduce the risk of injury.** It also increases your body's temperature to increase the speed of your muscle contractions. This makes your muscles less stiff and easier to work with.

Warm-ups include walking, jogging and stretching.



Cooling down brings your body back to a state of rest. It prevents blood from pooling in your muscles, lowers your heart rate naturally, and prevents fainting by ensuring that your body has enough oxygen. To cool down, gradually decrease the intensity of whichever exercise you're doing. *For example, if you're running, start jogging. After about five minutes of jogging, slow down and walk until your breathing is under control. End off with stretching and deep breathing.*

GOOD TO KNOW

- If you experience any pain, rest until you feel better. Take at least one day off per week.
- Be conscious of how different exercises make you feel. If you have discomfort, stop immediately and talk to your doctor.
- Remember to do slow stretching before and after working out.
- Learn the proper techniques to ensure you don't hurt your muscles.
- Stay hydrated and drink water before, during and after your session.
- Make sure your equipment and shoes fit properly to prevent injuries.



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ADJUST YOUR LIFE TO SUIT YOUR BACK AVOID BACK AND NECK INJURIES WITH GOOD ERGONOMICS

**Do you often experience back and neck pain?
Your environment's ergonomics may be to blame.**



Ergonomics is the process where environments like workplaces are designed so they are fit for people to use.

The use of ergonomics is to create safe, productive and comfortable environments. This is done by considering the differences of people, including body size, strength, skill, speed, vision and hearing. Back and neck pain are common injuries (usually work-related), and often caused by sitting in a chair or heavy lifting.

Good ergonomics can help prevent neck and back injuries, and maintain a healthy back and neck.

Bad posture is one of the biggest culprits when it comes to back and neck pain. Bad posture means you're sitting, standing or laying down in a way that places strain on your body.



For example, when you're sitting hunched over a computer screen, or continuously using your neck and back muscles as you scroll on your cellphone. You're using those muscles in an unusual and unintended way, causing them to ache or even spasm.

BECOME ERGONOMIC SAVVY

Sitting at a desk



- Adjust your seat so that your desk is flush with your elbow.
- Keep your feet firmly on the floor. If your desk is too high, raise your chair and use a footrest below your feet.
- Leave a small gap between the back of your knees and the front of your seat.
- Your knees should be at or below hip level.
- Adjust the backrest to support your lower- and middle-back. Use a cushion for extra support.
- Adjust the height of your computer screen. Use books or a stand to raise the height if needed.

Driving



- Sit with your knees level to your hips. Place a rolled-up towel behind you for extra support.
- Sit at a comfortable distance from the steering wheel. Adjust your seat so you're easily within reach to steer the wheel.
- Buckle your seatbelt and keep at least 3cm between the centre of your car's airbag cover and your breastbone to prevent the risk of airbag injury.

EXERCISE FOR GOOD POSTURE



1

Chin tuck

Do this sitting or standing. Roll your shoulders back and forward again. Look straight ahead, place two fingers on your chin and move your head back. Hold for 3-5 seconds and release. Repeat 10 times. The more of a double chin you create, the better the results will be.

2

Chair stretch

Sit up straight and tall. Extend your arms out in front, keep your shoulders low and your ab muscles tight. Slowly bring your elbows back so that they're in line with your shoulders. Do these movements while keeping your shoulders low.

3

Trap stretch

Sit tall, with your hips neutral and feet flat. Reach one hand up over your head and gently pull your head towards your shoulder (don't pull hard on your head). Do this 1-3 times for 30-60 seconds at a time.

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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.