

YOUR CARE POLMED

July 2021



“Family: the ones you
live with, laugh with
and love.”
- Unknown



Dear Member

Spring is no longer too far away, so as we shiver our way through the last two months of winter, we're bringing the heat to help you navigate your way around winter's health hazards.

In this month's edition, you can read about countering three of the worst bad health habits in winter and how to avoid them, as well as helpful advice to overcome the winter blues. In addition, we look at great ways to manage your blood pressure and finally, we help you prepare for your mid-year diabetes check-up, which is now due.

Stay warm, stay safe and stay close to those you love.

Happy reading!

Kind regards,
Polmed Your Care Support Team

In this issue...

THREE BAD WINTER HEALTH HABITS

Some habits might make us feel more comfortable during the cold months but can have long-term effects on our health. Here's how to navigate those health hazards.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

DO NOT LET THE WINTER BLUES GET YOU DOWN

With everything happening in the world right now, winter can be extra depressing. Here's how to stay positive and keep moving forward.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

BLOOD PRESSURE: IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE SALT

Watching your salt intake is a great way to manage your blood pressure, but there are other lifestyle habits that will promote a longer-lasting effect.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

IT'S TIME FOR YOUR MID-YEAR DIABETES CHECK-UP

Here's how you can prep for this vital part of your diabetes management.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

CONFIDENTIALITY: This email contains confidential information. The information on this email and attachments thereto (if any) is only for the use of the intended recipient. If you are not the intended recipient, any disclosure, copying and/or distribution of the content of this email to any person other than the sender (as specified in the email), or the taking of any action thereon, is strictly prohibited. Interception of this email is also prohibited. If you have received this email in error please notify the sender (as specified in the email) using the contact details contained in such e-mail and delete this email and any attachments thereto, once you have notified the sender.

*Please use the latest browser to view the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS).



**IF YOU ARE OVER 35 YEARS OLD,
REGISTER AND GET VACCINATED NOW!**

<https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za/#/>

COVID-19 Public Hotline: 0800 029 999
WhatsApp Support Line: 0600-123456

COVID-19
Online Resource & News Portal
SACoronavirus.co.za



**STAY
SAFE**

PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA

YOUR CARE POLMED

July 2021



It's time for your mid-year diabetes check-up



7% of the South African population is living with Type-2 Diabetes



It is important that you and your diabetes care team work together in order to manage this condition appropriately. Completing your mid-year diabetes check-up forms part of this.

Diabetes is a Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB) condition, meaning tests and services provided during check-ups will be covered by your medical aid (according to scheme rules and managed care protocols). Make sure that you register your condition with your medical aid in order to access these PMB benefits.

Should you be diagnosed with Diabetes Mellitus, please contact the Polmed Disease Risk Management Programme for more information and enrolment onto the programme. Phone the Call Centre on **0860 765 633 during office hours (08:30 - 17:00) Mondays to Fridays**, and follow the prompts to the **Disease Risk Management Programme**. Alternatively, send an email to polmeddiseaseman@medscheme.co.za.

CHECK-UP CHECKLIST

GP CONSULTATION

During a check-up, your doctor will conduct an examination, which includes:



A weight check



A physical examination for any signs of diabetes-related complications



Blood tests to assess sugar control, kidney function and complications



Evaluation of your medication



Examination of your skin for any signs of complications or reactions to medication

Your doctor may also refer you to other specialists for additional tests.



HbA1c TEST

- An HbA1c test measures how effective the long-term glucose management has been.
- A high HbA1c reading means you're at high risk for diabetes-related complications.
- A normal HbA1c reading for diabetics is 6.5% (48 mmol/mol), but readings can fluctuate between 6% and 8% (42 mmol/mol and 64 mmol/mol).

** Patients with pre-existing conditions may have different target ranges for HbA1c readings based on clinical guidelines.*



BLOOD PRESSURE

- Diabetes can affect the blood vessels in the body, causing blood pressure to rise.
- Those living with diabetes are 2 to 3 times more likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke than those who don't have diabetes.
- Healthy blood pressure readings for those with diabetes should be no more than 130/80 mmHg.

** Patients with pre-existing conditions may have different target ranges for blood pressure readings based on clinical guidelines.*



PRESCRIPTION RENEWAL

- Prescribed medication can help you manage your condition.
- It's important to refill your prescription before your medication is finished.
- When talking to your doctor about your medication, share any side-effects you may be experiencing.



FEET ASSESSMENT

- About 50% of people with diabetes will experience nerve damage, which can affect foot health.
- Nerve damage can increase the risk of foot infections, sores, cracks and amputations.
- Your doctor or a podiatrist will guide you on keeping your feet healthy and reducing the risk of complications.

The next time you go for your check-up, take this checklist with you to enable you to better monitor your condition.

References

- <https://www.idf.org/e-library/epidemiology-research/diabetes-atlas/159-idf-diabetes-atlas-ninth-edition-2019.html>
- <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/312625#other-diabetes-tests>
- <https://www.diabetes.co.uk/what-is-hba1c.html>
- <https://www.diabetes.co.uk/hba1c-test.html>
- <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000082.htm>
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/diabetes>
- <https://www.diabetes.org.uk/guide-to-diabetes/managing-your-diabetes/blood-pressure>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetic-neuropathy/symptoms-causes/syc-20371580>
- <https://www.diaabetessa.org.za/atoz-nerve-disease/>
- <https://www.diabetes.co.uk/features/diabetes-podiatry.html>
- <https://www.webmd.com/diabetes/high-blood-pressure>
- <https://www.diabetes.ascensia.ie/about-diabetes/hba1c-monitoring/>

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.

YOUR CARE POLMED

July 2021



Blood pressure: it's not all about the salt



South Africa has the highest prevalence of hypertension in Southern Africa.

South Africans living with hypertension:

27% of  26% of 

Watching your salt intake is a great way to manage your blood pressure, but there are other lifestyle habits that will promote a longer-lasting effect.

MANAGING BLOOD PRESSURE



MEDICATION

- Medication can help to manage blood pressure.
- It's important to take the medication as prescribed.
- Only your doctor may stop (discontinue) your medication.



MAINTAIN A HEALTHY BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

- **BMI is a measure of body fat** and it helps to determine if you are overweight.
- A BMI reading of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered healthy. **A reading above 30 indicates obesity.**
- 75% of hypertension diagnoses are related to obesity.



FOLLOW THE DASH DIET

- The **DASH diet** stands for **Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension**. A lowering of blood pressure through the DASH diet has been linked to a 27% decrease in the rate of strokes and a 15% decrease in the rate of heart disease.
- The diet encourages the consumption of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods.



EXERCISE REGULARLY

- 150 minutes of exercise every week can help **reduce** high blood pressure by about 5 - 8 mmHg.
- You can **stay active** by dancing, doing household chores and walking.
- When lifting weights, use proper form, lighter weights, and don't hold your breath.



ABSTAIN OR DRINK LESS ALCOHOL

- 8 or more alcoholic drinks a week are associated with a 60% or higher increased risk of high blood pressure.
- Heavy drinkers who cut back to moderate drinking can lower their blood pressure.
- Moderate drinking is considered a drink a day for women and up to two drinks for men.

References

- <https://health-e.org.za/2019/05/17/the-struggle-for-hypertension-in-south-africa/>
- <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-6642-3>
- <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/ijhy/2020/4273456/>
- https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm
- <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/general-publication/obesity-your-waistline-killing-you>
- <https://www.pbrc.edu/dash-diet-5-plus/>
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1871402118302339>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20046974>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20045206>
- <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/09/200909085954.htm>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/expert-answers/blood-pressure/faq-20058254>

YOUR CARE POLMED

July 2021



Don't let the winter blues get you down



It's estimated that, as the days get shorter and colder, **around 20% of the population (75% of whom are women) experience fatigue, irritability, anxiety, weight gain, social withdrawal and a lack of alertness.**

We refer to this as the winter blues, and the symptoms are usually temporary and manageable. But sometimes, they can be more severe and manifest as seasonal affective disorder (SAD).



What is the difference between the winter blues and SAD?

Winter blues

Occur only during winter
Some changes in sleep patterns
Spending a day or two in bed
Lack of motivation (for some tasks)
Feeling less sociable

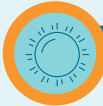
SAD

It occurs in both winter and summer
Frequent changes in sleep and eating patterns
Inability to function in daily life
Suicidal thoughts and feelings of hopelessness
Withdrawing and isolating from friends and family



Beating the winter blues

You should know that both the winter blues and SAD can be managed despite what you may be feeling.



Get some sunshine

A lack of vitamin D, which comes from the sun, can worsen symptoms of depression, so getting a little sunshine can improve your mood. If it's too cold to go outside, move your chair or workstation next to the window that gets the most sunlight – but don't forget to wear sunscreen.



Sleep well

Getting enough sleep can help to reset your body and your mood. Try going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, and avoid using your phone in bed.



Stay active

This can be hard to do when you're cold and feeling low, but exercise could be precisely what you need. You don't even need to go outside. Household chores and dancing can keep you active and improve your mood.



Ask for help

If you're feeling blue, reach out – it's one of the best things you can do for your health.

You can't control the changing weather, but you can control what you do about your mental health. Don't shy away from reaching out if you feel that the winter blues are not lessening.

References:

- https://www.sadag.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=148:sad-beating-the-winter-woes&catid=61&Itemid=143
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-beat-the-winter-blues-5087998>
- <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/whats-the-difference-between-the-winter-blues-and-seasonal-affective-disorder-or-sad/>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/winter-blues-vs-seasonal-affective-disorder-5101512>
- <https://share.baptisthealth.com/winter-blues-vs-seasonal-affective-disorder/>
- <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/12/181205134045.htm>
- <https://k102.iheart.com/featured/amy-james/content/2019-06-04-household-chores-that-can-actually-boost-your-mood/>

YOUR CARE POLMED

July 2021



Three bad winter health habits



With winter upon us, it's tempting to just snuggle under a blanket with a cup of hot chocolate. It's easy to fall into bad habits at this time of year when all we can think about is staying warm.

Unfortunately, some winter habits can negatively impact our health, increasing our risk, for example, for diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Three habits you need to watch out for this winter

1



Comfort eating

The cold weather may increase cravings, but that doesn't mean you have to go for unhealthy foods. Creamy stews are usually rich in salt, sugar and fat, increasing your risk for obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

Vegetable stews and soups, as well as green tea, are great ways to feed your cravings and stay both warm and healthy.

2



Less movement

When it's cold, sometimes the last thing you want to do is move around. But staying active during winter will not only warm you up; it can also boost your immune system.

If it's too cold to go outside, there are plenty of exercises you can do indoors, such as lunges, jumping jacks, sit-ups, push-ups, and even dancing. If you do exercise outside, don't forget to layer up, wear gloves and a hat or beanie.

3



Drinking less water

It's easier to drink more water during the warmer months. However, water is just as important during winter. Even minor dehydration can affect your health.

If you find cold water challenging to drink, try warm or boiled water. Drinking warm water can also be beneficial for the body.

Your health matters, especially during winter, so don't let the cold make you forget about your wellbeing.



References:

- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/healthy-lifestyle-can-prevent-diabetes-and-even-reverse-it-2018090514698>
- <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-06-lifestyle-habits-quickly-blood-pressure.html>
- <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/disease-prevention/cardiovascular-disease/preventing-cvd/>
- <https://www.everydayhealth.com/healthy-living/fitness/easy-winter-exercise-tips-help-you-stay-fit/>
- <https://www.brmsonline.com/blog/wellness/2018/winter-workout-at-home>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2019/12/19/are-you-drinking-enough-water-during-winter-months>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-drinking-hot-water>