

YOUR CARE POLMED

September 2021



“Spring adds new life and new beauty to all that is.”
- Jessica Harrelson



Dear Member

In South Africa, the first of September is considered to be the dawn of a new season, that of spring! It's a season of growth, blooms, leaves on the trees and fruits in the making.

Your immune system, however, needs to be protected all year round. What better way to do that than by eating the right foods? We've included an infographic about a diet to **boost your immune system this spring**.

Also featured in this month's newsletter is a question about how well you are **managing hypertension**, reasons why your back pain won't go away and lastly, **managing diabetes in spring**.

Here's to a healthy and balanced life this season!

Kind regards,
Polmed Your Care Support Team

In this issue...

MANAGING DIABETES IN SPRING

Spring is the perfect time for a fresh start and, with 4 million people in South Africa living with diabetes, it's also the perfect time to find new ways to manage the condition.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

SPRING DIET TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

It may be spring, but that doesn't mean you can't get colds or flu. Your immune system needs to be protected all year round, and eating the right foods will help.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

WHY WON'T MY BACK PAIN GO AWAY?

With 80% of South Africans expected to deal with back pain at some point in their lives, it's important to understand what causes it, and how to manage it.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

HOW WELL ARE YOU MANAGING HYPERTENSION?

Living healthily with hypertension is possible, as long as you monitor your blood pressure with regular tests.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

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Managing diabetes in spring



Spring is the perfect time for a fresh start and, with 4 million people in South Africa living with diabetes, it's also the perfect time to find new ways to manage the condition.

4 diabetes spring resolutions



1. Spring-clean your home

Cleaning out your home will give you a good workout. This can help to control your glucose levels, which is important for diabetes management.



2. Stay hydrated

With temperatures rising, you'll need to stay hydrated. As high blood sugar can cause dehydration, keep a bottle of water nearby. Add slices of lemon, mint or cucumber for taste. It's also best to stay indoors if it's too warm outside.



3. Manage sweet spring foods

Avocados, papayas, strawberries and watermelons are delicious spring fruits, all of which you can enjoy in portion-controlled amounts.

"Fruits are not high in sugar, and we must not propagate this myth," says Monique Piderit, a registered dietitian from Nutritional Solutions. "Rather, it's about portion-controlling the fruit we eat at a time to about one fistful size per serving. All fruit is great."



4. Watch your feet

Warmer weather means open sandals and the outdoors. However, feet are at an increased risk for injury and blisters for individuals with diabetes. It's important to keep feet dry, and to check daily for sores and blisters. Make sure to wash your feet every day with soap and water. Avoid walking barefoot, and only wear shoes that are strong and comfortable.



Spring is in the air, so use the changing season as an opportunity to take better care of your health.

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Why won't my back pain go away?



With 80% of South Africans expected to deal with back pain at some point in their lives, it's important to understand what causes it, and how to manage it.

What causes back pain?

Your spine is a complex system of muscles, nerves, joints and intervertebral discs. Straining of the muscles, nerves and joints can cause back pain, as can constant stress or ageing, which can affect the intervertebral discs.

Managing back pain



Painkillers

While many individuals look to painkillers to manage backache, it's not a long-term solution. Taking painkillers for too long can increase the risk of addiction and substance abuse. In fact, over the past five years in South Africa, statistics show that painkillers have caused an increase in treatment admissions.



Stretches

Stretching can help you to manage back pain and improve functionality. Try these two easy stretches:

Stretch #1

1. Lie on your back.
2. Pull your knees to your chest. You should feel a stretch in your middle and lower back.
3. Hold the position for 5-10 seconds, and then return to your original position. Repeat 5 times.

Stretch #2

1. Kneel and sit back on your heels.
2. Slowly lean forward and reach out, resting your forehead on the floor. Make sure to keep your buttocks on your heels.
3. Focus on your breathing, and hold the position for 30 seconds.

Sitting also puts pressure on the discs, so it is important to get up and move around if you are working in a seated position for extended periods of time.



While you can find ways to manage back pain, it's important to find the root cause. This can be done by consulting a physiotherapist or biokineticist, who will help you to treat it, instead of just managing it.

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Spring diet to boost your immune system

It may be spring, but that doesn't mean you can't get colds or flu. Your immune system needs to be protected all year round. What better way to do that than by eating the right foods?



PROBIOTICS

Around 70% of your immune system is found in your gut. By taking care of your gut, you can protect your immune system. Probiotics - in the form of plain yoghurt, maas (amasi) and sauerkraut - are important for gut health.



VITAMIN D

Vitamin D helps your immune system to work properly.



SELENIUM

Selenium fights off toxic pollutants.



ZINC

Zinc is essential for fighting off bacteria.



VITAMIN B6

Vitamin B6 helps to produce white blood and T-cells.



IMMUNE-BOOSTER SPRINGTIME RECIPE

Broccoli and Orange Salad (courtesy of Monique Piderit)

Serves 6 people

Ingredients:

- 1 head broccoli, separated into small florets
- 2 tbsp orange juice
- 2 tbsp honey
- 2 tsp soya sauce
- 1 tsp cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp sunflower oil
- 1 tbsp chopped coriander
- 1 orange, peeled, cut into 0,5 cm slices, halved and seeded
- ½ small red onion, cut crossways into thin slices and separated
- Two handfuls of almonds
- ¼ tsp black pepper



Method:

- In a large pot of lightly salted water, cook the broccoli florets for 3 minutes until crisp-tender
- Drain into a colander, rinse under cold running water
- For the dressing, whisk together the orange juice, honey, soya sauce and vinegar in a small bowl. Whisk in the oil and stir in the coriander
- In a large bowl, toss the broccoli, orange and vinaigrette
- Arrange on plates
- Top with the onion and two handfuls of almond slices
- Sprinkle with black pepper

Make the best of spring by keeping your immune system healthy and strong.

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- Monique Piderit, Registered Dietitian from Nutritional Solutions

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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 polmeddiseaseaman@medscheme.co.za with your membership number and contact details.

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How well are you managing hypertension?



Hypertension affects **1 in 3** South Africans and, if left uncontrolled, can cause heart failure in **50-60%** of patients.



As September is **Heart Awareness Month**, what better time to check in with your heart health and ensure that you're managing your blood pressure well?

LIVING WITH HYPERTENSION



1. Go for regular blood pressure tests

- An annual blood pressure test is the perfect way to monitor blood pressure
- The target BP reading for individuals with hypertension is 130/80 mm Hg

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



2. Undergo serum creatinine tests

- High blood pressure can cause an increase in levels of creatinine, a waste product filtered out by the kidneys, and affect kidney function
- A serum creatinine test, in the form of a blood test, helps to evaluate kidney function



3. Take medication as prescribed

- Medication aimed at widening blood vessels is an effective way to manage blood pressure
- You should always take your medication as prescribed, and stop only if your doctor gives you the green light to do so



4. Exercise

- Exercise is a great way to control blood pressure, and keep your heart healthy
- 30 minutes of exercise, 5 days a week, can help to reduce blood pressure
- People with high blood pressure should do moderate exercise such as brisk walking, dancing and riding a bike



5. Watch your salt intake

- Too much salt can make hypertension worse by increasing your blood pressure
- Cutting back on salt is good for your blood pressure and your heart
- Remove salt from your dinner table
- Replace salt in cooking with garlic and basil and avoid processed foods

Living healthily with hypertension is possible, as long as you monitor your blood pressure with regular tests.

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