

# YOUR CARE POLMED

April 2022



“The greatest weapon  
against stress is our  
ability to choose one  
thought over another.”

- William James



Dear Member

Good health habits can help you and your loved ones to reduce the risk of developing non-communicable diseases (also known as chronic conditions) and better manage existing chronic conditions.

This month, we've included an infographic that highlights **four good habits** to help achieve better health.

Other topics included in this edition:

- Why are you not taking your **medication**?
- Just breathe to help **manage stress and anxiety**.

**Here's to your optimal health and wellness!**

Kind regards,  
**Polmed Your Care Support Team**

In this issue...

## GOOD BEHAVIOURS = GOOD HEALTH

Good health habits can help you to reduce your risk of developing NCDs (also known as chronic conditions) and better manage existing chronic conditions.

[> READ MORE...](#)

## JUST BREATHE

An effective method of managing stress is breathing exercises. They calm the body and release tension, and have been found to help ease COVID-19 anxiety.

[> READ MORE...](#)

## WHY ARE YOU NOT TAKING YOUR MEDICATION?

Taking prescribed medication is an effective way to manage your health. It's important to understand the difference between the types of medication that could be prescribed and to follow your doctor's orders.

[> READ MORE...](#)

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



**KIDS OVER 12+ YEARS OLD CAN NOW  
BE REGISTERED FOR VACCINATION.**

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

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

**STAY  
SAFE**  
PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA

**COVID-19**

Online Resource & News Portal  
SAcoronavirus.co.za



health  
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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## Good behaviours = Good health

In South Africa

**76%** of non-communicable disease (NCD) deaths in 2019

were linked to cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory illnesses and heart disease.



Good health habits can help you to reduce your risk of developing NCDs (also known as chronic conditions) and better manage existing chronic conditions.

### 4 GOOD HABITS FOR BETTER HEALTH

#### 1. STOP TOBACCO USE

Tobacco use is responsible for 44 000 deaths in South Africa every year.

Quitting tobacco is a process, but the following steps can help:

- Identifying and avoiding your triggers
- Joining a support group



Polmed has a programme that can assist you on your journey to quitting smoking. You can enrol onto the programme by accessing the HealthCraft website on [www.gosmokefree.co.za](http://www.gosmokefree.co.za)

#### 2. EAT A HEALTHY AND BALANCED DIET

A poor diet, usually high in salt, sugar and fats, can be harmful, especially if you've been diagnosed with a Non Communicable Disease for example high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol etc.

A healthy and balanced diet should include:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole grains
- Protein



#### 3. EXERCISE REGULARLY

Exercise can improve your overall health and help you to better manage health conditions. Try to exercise at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

**Note:** Remember to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise programme.



#### 4. REDUCE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

It's estimated that one in 10 deaths in South Africa can be linked to alcohol abuse.

The following steps can help you to cut down on your alcohol consumption:

- Choosing a smaller glass size
- Having only one drink a week
- Removing alcohol from the house

#### TOP TIP: Take care of your mental health

Poor mental health can cause you to make poor lifestyle choices. Taking regular breaks to rest, exercising and talking about your feelings with loved ones or your doctor can be beneficial.

Polmed has a mental health programme. If you have any questions or need more information, please call Polmed on **0860 765 633** (select the option for the Disease Management Programme then Mental Health), or send an email to [polpsych@medscheme.co.za](mailto:polpsych@medscheme.co.za) with your membership number and contact details.

**Good behaviour can equal good results, so if you want the best results for your health start following these guidelines today.**

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## Just breathe



Studies indicate that South Africans are

**56% MORE STRESSED** since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



High stress levels increase your risk for:

- Heart problems
- Depression
- Even weaken your immune system



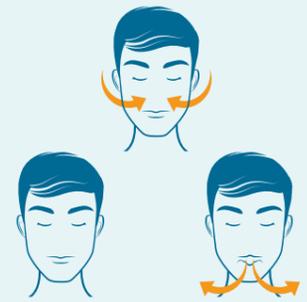
An effective method of managing stress is **breathing exercises**. They calm the body and release tension, and have been found to help ease COVID-19 anxiety.

The next time you're feeling stressed or anxious, try one of these easy breathing exercises:

### 4-7-8 BREATHING

**THIS BREATHING TECHNIQUE IS BENEFICIAL FOR ANXIETY AND CAN ALSO HELP YOU TO SLEEP BETTER.**

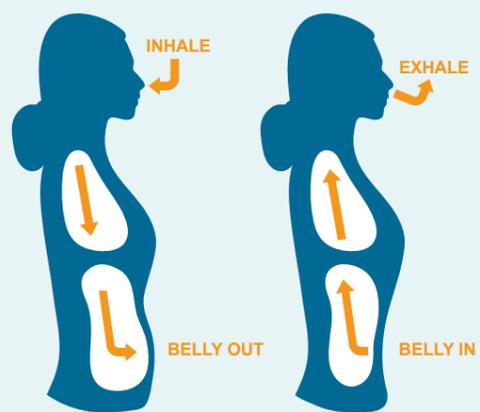
1. Get into a comfortable sitting position, relaxing your neck and shoulders.
2. Breathe out through your mouth with a "whoosh" sound.
3. Close your mouth and breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.
4. Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
5. Breathe out through your nose or mouth, making a "whoosh" sound, for 8 seconds.
6. Repeat four times.



### BELLY BREATHING

**DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING RELAXES THE BODY. IT ALSO REDUCES YOUR HEART RATE AND BLOOD PRESSURE – BOTH OF WHICH RISE WHEN YOU'RE STRESSED.**

1. Get into a comfortable sitting or lying position.
2. Put one hand on your upper chest and the other on your belly.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose.
4. As you breathe in, feel your belly rise and rib cage expand. The hand on your chest should be relatively still.
5. Purse your lips (as if you're sipping through a straw) and slowly breathe out through your lips or nose.
6. Repeat until you feel relaxed.



While breathing exercises are a great way to manage stress, it's important to reach out to your doctor if you feel that stress is affecting your health and impacting on your day-to-day habits.

### POLMED HAS A MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME.

This programme aims to improve your quality of life and empowers you to manage your condition more effectively. Once you've enrolled on the programme, a dedicated Mental Health Case Manager will be assigned to assist you and collaborate with your treating doctor to ensure that you get the support you need.

If you have any questions or need more information, please call Polmed on **0860 765 633** (select the option for the Disease Management Programme then Mental Health), or send an email to [polpsych@medscheme.co.za](mailto:polpsych@medscheme.co.za) with your membership number and contact details.

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• Dr Ela Manga, integrative medical doctor and breath specialist

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## Why are you not taking your medication?



**Taking prescribed medication is an effective way to manage your health. It's important to understand the difference between the types of medication that could be prescribed and follow your doctor's orders.**



### PAIN MEDICATION

Almost 1 in 5 South African adults live with chronic pain, which can affect their quality of life.

Pain medication is the most common way of dealing with chronic pain, but its long-term use can be harmful. The long-term use of pain medication has been linked to addiction, kidney failure, heart problems, and an increased risk of death due to overdose. Therefore, take pain medication only as prescribed by your doctor.

If you're using over-the-counter medication, then stick to the prescribed dosages on the pamphlet. If you continue to experience chronic pain, discuss this with your doctor. You may need alternative treatments, such as physical therapy, exercise or possibly surgery.



### ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotics are prescribed to treat some types of infections caused by bacteria. They do not work on viruses, such as those that cause colds, flu and COVID-19, and taking them unnecessarily can be harmful.

You should complete the full course of antibiotic medication, even if you're feeling better. Stopping halfway can cause the bacteria to strengthen, and if you become reinfected, the antibiotics may not be as effective.



### CHRONIC MEDICATION

Chronic medication is prescribed to treat long-lasting illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension or mental health conditions.

If you're experiencing any side effects from the medication, don't stop taking the medication without speaking to your doctor. Ask your doctor about alternative therapies.

Even if you feel better, it doesn't mean you no longer need to take the medication. Stopping your medication without your doctor's permission can worsen symptoms and increase your risk of complications.



### DISCUSSING QUESTIONS WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Discussing your questions and concerns with a doctor can sometimes be a little scary, but it's important that you understand your condition and know how to take care of yourself.

Print out the checklist below and tick the questions you'd like to discuss with your doctor during your next visit. You can ask these questions to make sure you get all the guidance you need:

1.	How long will it take before my treatment starts working?	
2.	Can I stop the treatment when I feel better?	
3.	I think I may be experiencing side effects from my medication. Do I need to change the medication or will they go away?	
4.	(Explain your symptoms to your doctor.) Is this part of my condition? Is there anything I can do about these symptoms?	
5.	I'm having trouble managing my other health concerns. Can we please discuss my other health concerns?	
6.	Will my alcohol and/or tobacco use affect my treatment?	
7.	I'd like to check up on my general health regularly. When do I need my next general check-up?	

**REMEMBER:** Never stop taking your medication or change the dosage unless you're advised to do so by your doctor. And if you experience severe side effects, talk to your doctor.

#### Need more information about chronic medication authorisation?

Go to the Polmed website ([www.polmed.co.za](http://www.polmed.co.za)) and click Members > Managed Care > Chronic Medicine Management for more details about this Programme and our disease authorisation process. Alternatively, send an email to [polmedcmm@medscheme.co.za](mailto:polmedcmm@medscheme.co.za).

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