

YOUR CARE POLMED

August 2022



Health is an investment,
not an expense.

- Anonymous



Dear Member

Diabetes is the biggest underlying cause of death for women in South Africa. So, to honour National Women's Month, we highlight **diabetes symptoms unique to women** and share tips on how women can manage this condition in order to help reduce the risk of complications.

We also tell you more about the practice of **polypharmacy** (when you frequently take medications for more than one condition at the same time) and how to do it safely, and ask whether you know your **risk for heart disease**, as well as where to find help.

We hope you have a healthy, productive Women's Month!

Polmed Your Care Team

In this issue...

POLYPHARMACY: GETTING YOUR MIX OF MEDS RIGHT

With proper and open communication between you and your doctors, taking multiple medications can be practised in a safe way that benefits your health.

> [READ MORE...](#)

DO YOU KNOW YOUR RISK FOR HEART DISEASE?

Because chronic conditions, such as heart disease, develop over time, it's important to assess which of your habits may be putting your health at risk.

> [READ MORE...](#)

DIABETES IN WOMEN

Statistics indicate that just over four million South Africans are living with diabetes, with the condition affecting more women than men.

> [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
Department:
Health
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Polypharmacy: getting your mix of meds right



Polypharmacy is the regular use of multiple medications at once.

You may find yourself having to take
5 OR MORE MEDICATIONS
at the same time, especially if you have chronic conditions.



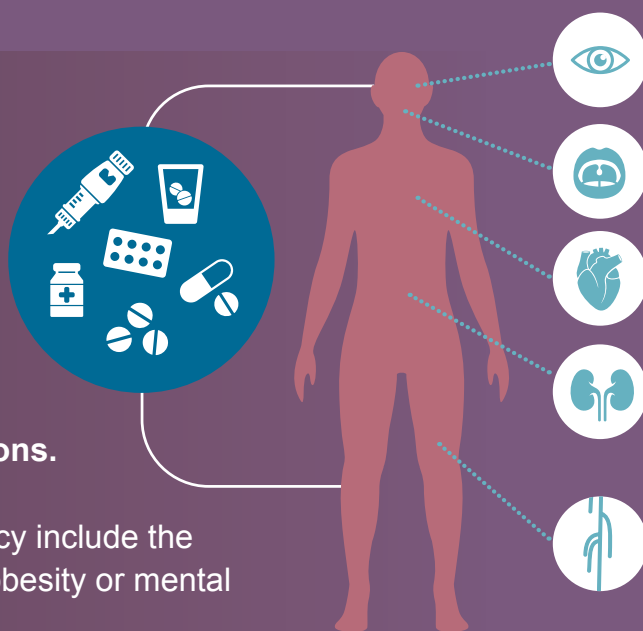
EXAMPLE:

IF YOU HAVE DIABETES AND EXPERIENCE COMPLICATIONS:

You may need to take insulin and medication to manage impaired vision, nerve damage as well as your kidney, oral and heart health.

While the intention is to target different health concerns at once, the practice of using multiple medications can increase the risk of complications.

Those who are more likely to practise polypharmacy include the elderly and those with multiple health conditions, obesity or mental health conditions.



COMPLICATIONS INCLUDE



Increased risk of side effects:

Due to either the use of multiple medications or dangerous drug combinations.



Reduced effectiveness of the medication:

This can worsen the health complications it was meant to address.



Confusion in keeping up with prescription doses:

This can result in a missed dose or an extra dose.

PRACTISE SAFE POLYPHARMACY

The best way to prevent complications when using multiple medications is by being open and honest about your use of medication.



Increased risk of side effects:

Due to either the use of multiple medications or dangerous drug combinations.



Reduced effectiveness of the medication:

This can worsen the health complications it was meant to address.



Confusion in keeping up with prescription doses:

This can result in a missed dose or an extra dose.

Taking more than one medication can be difficult to manage, but with proper and open communication between you and your doctors, taking multiple medications can be practised in a safe way that benefits your health.

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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.

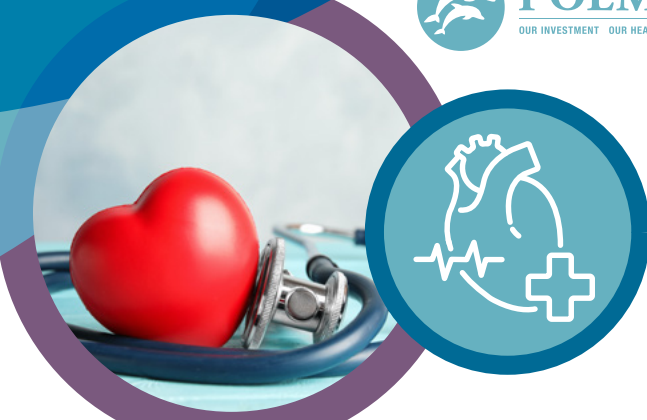
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POLMED
OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

Do you know your risk for heart disease?



Heart disease causes almost 17.3% OF DEATHS in South Africa every year.



Because chronic conditions, such as heart disease, develop over time, it's important to assess which of your habits may be putting your health at risk.

Certain **risk factors** are **non-modifiable** = family history



You can, however, focus on **modifiable risk factors** since you can change these to help reduce your risk = lifestyle habits

PREVENTING HEART DISEASE

It's estimated that **90% OF CASES OF HEART DISEASE** can be prevented through healthier lifestyle changes.



Healthier lifestyle changes include:



1. QUITTING SMOKING

7 MILLION SOUTH AFRICANS AGED 15 AND OLDER CURRENTLY SMOKE. Cigarette smokers are 2 to 4 times more likely to develop heart disease than non-smokers.

Quitting smoking reduces your risk of heart disease by **50%**

Polmed has a programme which can assist you with quitting smoking: **GoSmokeFree**.

START THE JOURNEY TODAY!

Book a pre-quit assessment with a GoSmokeFree advisor and begin to feel the benefits immediately. Visit our website at www.gosmokefree.co.za for more information.

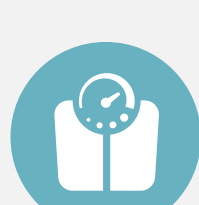


2. MANAGING HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

HYPERTENSION IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF HEART DISEASE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

45% **48%** in South Africa older than 15 live with hypertension.

Hypertension can be properly managed with medication, adequate exercise and a healthier diet.



3. MANAGING YOUR WEIGHT

THOSE WITH OBESITY ARE BELIEVED TO BE 28% MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP HEART DISEASE, EVEN IF THEY DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS.

36.7% of adults in South Africa are expected to be obese by 2030.



Reduce your risk for obesity by following a healthy diet and increasing your levels of activity.

Polmed has a Weight Management Programme. The aim of the Programme is to assist with getting you started on your weight loss journey.

HOW WILL THIS TREATMENT BE FUNDED?

Polmed covers the full cost of the Programme for qualifying members from the overall in-hospital benefit at Polmed rates and not from your out-of-hospital (day-to-day) benefits.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Should you require assistance, information or have any questions, call Polmed on **0860 765 633** (follow the voice prompts to the Disease Management Programme) between 08:30 and 17:00 Monday to Friday, or send an email to polmedwmp@medscheme.co.za



4. LOWERING CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

23.9% of South African adults have high total cholesterol.

Lowering levels of total cholesterol by 10% can reduce the risk of heart disease by **30%**



You can help to lower your cholesterol levels by:

- Making changes to your diet
- Regular exercise
- Taking your prescribed medication
- Monitoring your cholesterol levels with regular doctor check-ups and tests



5. KEEPING TRACK OF BLOOD GLUCOSE LEVELS

JUST OVER 4 MILLION SOUTH AFRICANS ARE CURRENTLY LIVING WITH DIABETES.

Those living with diabetes are 2 TO 4 TIMES more likely to develop heart disease than those without diabetes.



You can keep track of your glucose levels with finger-prick tests.

While heart disease is the fourth-leading cause of death in South Africa, you can reduce your risk by following a healthy diet, exercising, and undergoing regular health screenings.

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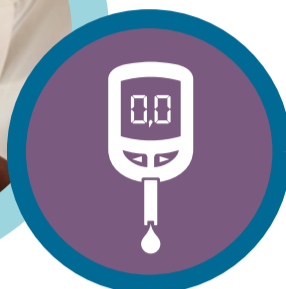
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Diabetes in women



Statistics indicate that just over four million South Africans are living with diabetes, with the condition affecting more women than men.

In fact, diabetes is the leading underlying cause of death for women in South Africa, accounting for **7.2%, 7.3% and 7.7% of deaths in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively.**



, gestational diabetes – high blood sugar experienced during pregnancy – affects around 18 to 25% of South African women.

DIABETES SYMPTOMS IN WOMEN

While many diabetes symptoms are common to men and women, some are unique to women.

Diabetes symptoms unique to women include:

Vaginal yeast infections



Urinary tract infections (UTIs)



Reduced sex drive



DIABETES COMPLICATIONS IN WOMEN

Unmanaged diabetes can increase the risk for a host of complications. In women, these include the risk for heart disease, kidney disease and depression.

1  **in** **5** 

female deaths in South Africa is caused by heart disease, the only way to mitigate these risks is by properly managing your condition.

MANAGING DIABETES

Diabetes can be managed with medication and by adopting appropriate lifestyle habits. These include staying active and following a healthy diet. Medication must be taken as prescribed and only stopped on the advice of your doctor.

In addition, you should go for regular Hb1Ac tests so that your doctor can monitor your condition and confirm that your lifestyle habits are having the desired effect.

Diabetes may affect some women differently from men, but that doesn't mean the condition isn't manageable. By taking your medication as prescribed and adopting healthy lifestyle habits, you can help reduce your risk of complications and go on to live a long and healthy life.

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