

YOUR CARE POLMED

May 2023



“The groundwork
of all happiness is
health.”

Leigh Hunt



Dear Member

As the temperature drops with winter kicking in, now's the time to take extra care of your health. Upping your vitamin Cs and zinc, getting your annual vaccinations, keeping active and eating well are all great ways to stay healthy over the changing seasons. But keeping an eye on your overall health will help you catch a preventable illness early on, increasing your chance of successful treatment.

This month we share an infographic on Hypertension that focuses on testing, prevention, and potential symptoms. We also have a handy guide to what to eat and what not to eat to keep healthy, and our monthly articles look at tried and tested ways to manage weight loss effectively and how to safeguard your health against pneumonia.

Have a healthy, active and happy month ahead!

Your Care Team

In this issue...

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF HYPERTENSION?

Estimates put undiagnosed hypertension at 49%. So, with most people experiencing little to no symptoms, how do you keep yourself healthy?

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

SAFEGUARD YOUR HEALTH AGAINST PNEUMONIA

Your most valuable asset remains your health and wellbeing. As a POLMED member, we're always striving to bring you new ways of proactively protecting it.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

DIABETES MEDICINE IS NOT A WEIGHT-LOSS DRUG.

Maintaining a healthy weight is vital in preventing and managing chronic conditions, but weight loss doesn't happen overnight.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

EAT THIS, NOT THAT

If you want to improve your eating and drinking habits, simply finding healthier alternatives can make a big difference.

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**FIGHT FOR
WHAT'S RIGHT**

**STAND UP AGAINST
FRAUD + WASTE + ABUSE
IT AFFECTS US ALL**



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POLMED
OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

What are the signs of hypertension?



Hypertension is a condition characterised by high blood pressure. In South Africa:

±45%  **AND ±48%**  over the age of 15 have hypertension

It's estimated that **49%** of these cases are undiagnosed.



Undiagnosed and unmanaged hypertension can increase the risk of:



Heart disease



Kidney disease



Stroke



Dementia



Vision loss

CAN I GET HYPERTENSION?

Risk factors for hypertension include:



Family history of hypertension



Obesity



Diabetes



High intake of alcohol



Smoking



Lack of exercise



High stress levels

With hypertension, prevention is always better than cure. So it's essential to monitor your health and look out for any potential signs and symptoms.

DO I HAVE HYPERTENSION?

There are usually no warning signs or symptoms, but you should consult your doctor immediately if you experience any of the following:



Early morning headaches



Anxiety



Blurred vision



Nosebleeds



Buzzing in the ears



Irregular heart rhythm



Nausea



Dizziness

TESTING FOR HYPERTENSION

Even if you don't experience symptoms or aren't at risk, it's still a good idea to check your blood pressure once a year.

PREVENTING HYPERTENSION

Regular exercise, avoiding alcohol and tobacco use, eating healthy and managing your stress levels can help to protect you from developing hypertension.

LIVING WITH HYPERTENSION

Early diagnosis can save lives. If you've been diagnosed with hypertension, managing the condition together with your doctor can prevent complications.

Managing hypertension can involve:

- Taking medication as prescribed
- Eating a diet high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and low in salt
- Engaging in regular and moderate exercise, such as walking, dancing and bike riding (remember to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise programme)

Hypertension may be a silent killer, but if you're diagnosed early, you can live a healthy and happy life.

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Safeguard your health against Pneumonia



Your most valuable asset remains your health and wellbeing, and as a member of POLMED, we're always striving to bring you new ways of proactively protecting it.

POLMED has a Wellness Benefit that offers members a pneumonia vaccination, such as Imovax® or Pneumovax®, and we urge you to consider using this great benefit to safeguard your health against this life-threatening illness. The pneumococcal vaccination is funded by the Preventative care benefit and is paid from Risk.



The article below contains useful information about pneumonia, and we highly recommend you discuss the need for vaccination with your doctor.

CUT YOUR PNEUMONIA RISK THIS WINTER

Along with HIV/Aids and strokes, pneumonia is now a leading cause of death in South Africa. So it's worth taking note of this deadly disease and how to prevent it.

Every year, an estimated **300,000 to 500,000** South Africans are struck by pneumonia. This lung infection can be confined to a single lobe or a lung segment or involve several lung areas, resulting in a high fever, coughing, and severe chest pain.

Although anyone can become infected with pneumonia, it's especially worrisome as far as older adults, babies, and people with pre-existing illnesses are concerned since their immune systems are often not strong enough to fight the infection.

Despite these stark figures, pneumonia is a treatable condition, provided you spot it early and get appropriate treatment as soon as possible. Read on to lower your risk of infection and improve your chances of recovery if you're unfortunate enough to become infected.

CAUSES

MANY UNDERLYING HEALTH PROBLEMS INCREASE YOUR PNEUMONIA RISK. THESE INCLUDE:



Cigarette smoking



Alcohol or drug abuse



Viral respiratory tract infections such as influenza or parainfluenza (this closely resembles the flu)



Chronic-obstructive pulmonary disease, or bronchiectasis (abnormal widening of the airways)



Cancer or cancer-related treatment



Institutionalisation in hospitals or nursing homes or following a stroke

SYMPTOMS

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF PNEUMONIA INCLUDE:

- Fever of 38.5°C or more with chills or shaking.
- Cough, which often produces sputum from the airways. The colour of the phlegm may be green or rusty, occasionally with blood specks. Sometimes no sputum is produced.
- Night sweats.
- Shallow, rapid breathing and rapid heart rate.
- Chest pain, which is worsened by inhalation or coughing. This may be only on one side and felt deep in the chest.
- Tiredness, body weakness (general malaise), confusion (particularly in older people).



These symptoms depend on age and other underlying health problems. In older people, signs may be much less noticeable. For example, shortness of breath isn't easy to spot but may be suspected when talking becomes interrupted and difficult.

TAKE ACTION

Prevention is always better than cure, so taking care of your health throughout the year, especially during winter, is essential. One way to do this is to get vaccinated.

Vaccines that help protect you against the most common bacterial cause of pneumonia are available. Your doctor can advise which vaccine is most suitable for you (this will depend on your age and other risk factors). While these vaccines may not always prevent pneumonia, they may prevent serious complications.

THESE STEPS WILL ALSO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE YOUR RISK OF PNEUMONIA:



Quit smoking



Don't use recreational drugs



Drink alcohol in moderation



Wash your hands regularly



Avoid contact with people with colds, flu, and other infections.

THE PATH TO RECOVERY

KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND IF YOU DO GET PNEUMONIA:

- Pneumonia always requires prompt medical care.
- The sooner you start treatment, the sooner you'll get better.
- Sometimes, a hospital stay is needed, but many people can be treated at home.
- Even if you feel better, follow your doctor's instructions.
- Take your prescription medication precisely as indicated.
- Be patient with yourself. It might take a while for your energy levels to return to normal.
- Force yourself to get enough rest. Otherwise, the infection may return.

Keep in mind that prevention is always better than cure. Learn more about your pneumonia vaccination benefit and protect yourself and your loved ones against the risk!

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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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Diabetes medicine is not a weight-loss drug



Maintaining a healthy weight is vital in preventing and managing chronic conditions, but weight loss doesn't happen overnight.

As losing weight can take time, many individuals look to medical drugs for quick weight-loss solutions. But, unfortunately, these aren't always safe, and using them for something they're not intended for can be detrimental to your health.



CHRONIC MEDICINE AND WEIGHT LOSS

Ozempic and Trulicity are medications registered and prescribed for patients with type 2 diabetes. Ozempic manages blood glucose and HbA1c levels, while Trulicity manages blood glucose and reduces the risk of heart disease among those with diabetes.

Even though they can trigger weight loss by reducing appetite and increasing satiety (the feeling of fullness), these medications must only be used if prescribed by your doctor.

Therefore, managing your weight over the long term will take more than a quick fix.

WEIGHT-LOSS TIPS

These are small habits you can adopt to help you lose weight:

MANAGE SCREEN TIME.

Overuse of devices contributes to our level of inactivity. Remove electronics from your bedroom, and try taking a two-hour screen break every day.



SNACK ON FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

It's recommended that we eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. If you can't manage this at mealtimes, enjoy them as snacks throughout the day.



DRINK MORE WATER.

Energy drinks and sodas are high in sugar. Cutting back can help you with weight loss. Try drinking water flavoured with fruit (such as lemons) instead.



START A WALKING GROUP.

Walking is an efficient and free way to stay active. Invite your friends and family to join your group for support and motivation.



Healthy weight loss is going to take time. However, small diet and lifestyle changes over time make it possible to achieve your weight-loss goals.

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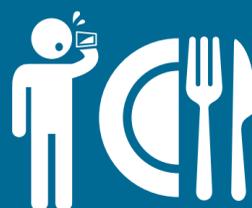
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Eat this, not that



A healthy diet is one of the best ways to protect your health and help prevent the development of chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease. If you have a chronic condition, it also plays a vital role in managing it.



With so many different diets promoted, knowing which is best for you can be difficult.

WHAT WE DO KNOW:

SMALL CHANGES = CAN MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

So if you want to improve your eating and drinking habits, simply finding healthier alternatives can make a big difference.

A GUIDE TO A HEALTHY DIET

A BALANCED DIET INVOLVES THE FIVE FOOD GROUPS:

1. **Fruits and vegetables** provide the body with healthy nutrients
2. **Carbohydrates** are the body's main source of energy
3. **Dairy** maintains bone and heart health
4. **Protein** is needed for growth and development, and the building of new cells
5. **Fats and oils** help the body absorb nutrients

TRY MAKING THESE HEALTHIER CHOICES

FOOD GROUP	CHOOSE THIS	NOT THAT
FRUITS	Fresh fruit 	Dried fruit or fruit with syrup
VEGETABLES	Boiled potatoes 	Fried potatoes
CARBOHYDRATES	Bran muffins 	Fatty cakes, pastries and doughnuts
	Whole-grain bread 	White bread
DAIRY	Low-fat milk 	Flavoured milk
	Fruit sherbet (watch portion size) 	Ice cream
	Plain yoghurt 	Flavoured (sweetened) yoghurt
PROTEIN	Grilled chicken breast 	Fried chicken
	Low-fat smoked Vienna 	Russian sausage
FATS AND OILS	Nut butter or margarine 	Butter
	Palm oil or coconut oil 	Canola oil

It may seem daunting, but with small and simple changes over time you can improve your diet and maintain a healthier lifestyle.

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