

YOUR CARE POLMED

June 2023



“A healthy outside
starts from the
inside.”

Robert Urich



Dear Member

There's no denying the immense benefits that preventive screening provides. Not only from a peace of mind perspective but knowing if you're at risk of developing a serious condition helps with your long-term health planning. So this month, we're continuing to look at how preventative screening can keep you healthy by unpacking why knowing your HIV status is essential.

If you have a child in your care with asthma, you'll want to check out our infographic that explores how to prevent asthma emergencies to keep you and your kids breathing easily. We're also sharing some tips to help you eat healthy on a budget.

Have a healthy, active and happy month ahead!

Your Care Team

In this issue...

DO YOU KNOW YOUR HIV STATUS?

South Africa has the fourth highest HIV prevalence globally, with only about 68% of those individuals testing positive receiving ART treatment. Know your status and protect yourself and your loved ones.

[> READ MORE...](#)

PREVENTING ASTHMA EMERGENCIES IN CHILDREN

Knowing how to manage this condition can help your children avoid hospitalisation – a stressful experience for you and your child.

[> READ MORE...](#)

HEALTHY EATING ON A BUDGET.

Healthy eating doesn't need to be a difficult or expensive process.

[> READ MORE...](#)

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**FIGHT FOR
WHAT'S RIGHT**

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



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Do you know your HIV status?



South Africa has the fourth highest HIV prevalence globally, with **around 8.4 million individuals reported to be HIV positive.**

However, statistics suggest that only **68%** of these individuals currently receive antiretroviral treatment (ART), critical to reducing HIV-related mortality.

Being aware of your HIV status – and receiving the necessary treatment – allows you to protect yourself and your loved ones.



TESTING FOR HIV

Everyone should know their HIV status. Individuals with a higher risk of contracting the virus should be tested more often.

This includes those who:

- have multiple sexual partners
- engage in regular sexual intercourse without protection
- engage in sexual intercourse with someone who is HIV-positive
- engage in sexual intercourse with someone whose sexual history they don't know
- share needles or syringes
- are diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- are diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB)

HOW FREQUENTLY SHOULD I GET TESTED?

You should test for HIV at least once a year. However, if you regularly share injecting equipment with others, have more than one sexual partner or have sexual intercourse with someone whose sexual history you don't know, you should discuss this with your doctor and get tested more frequently.

POLMED offers a screening benefit, paid from risk, which includes an annual HIV screening test. In addition, POLMED's HIV Management Programme provides support if your test result should be positive. Please refer to our website for more details about using these benefits.

An HIV diagnosis can be alarming, but knowing your status is the responsible thing to do. And by knowing your status, you'll be able to receive treatment, protect your loved ones and go on to live a long and healthy life.

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Published: June 2023

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

May 2023



Preventing asthma emergencies in children



It is estimated that **21%** of children in South Africa have asthma.



Parents need to know how to manage this condition as asthma emergencies can lead to hospitalisation – a stressful experience for both parent and child.

An essential step in reducing the number of asthma emergencies in children is for parents to have an asthma action plan in place.

WHAT IS AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN?

This written plan, created with your child's doctor, provides tips for managing your child's asthma and preventing asthma attacks ([click here for a template](#)). The plan also includes your child's details, medication and possible asthma triggers.



You and your child's doctor, teachers, school nurse and other caregivers should have a copy of the plan.



Your child's doctor should review the plan every six months, and if it's updated, new copies should be shared with all relevant adults.

USING AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

An asthma action plan is divided into three zones, outlining action according to the severity of the symptoms:



GREEN ZONE

This is the best place for an asthmatic child to be. The child isn't experiencing any symptoms and can continue taking their medication as prescribed.



YELLOW/AMBER ZONE

When a child experiences mild symptoms, such as chest tightness and mild wheezing, it prevents them from participating at school or in sports.

The child is advised to slow down and take their medication as prescribed by their doctor to relieve symptoms.



RED ZONE

The red zone represents an asthma emergency where a child requires immediate medical attention.



When a child begins to experience severe symptoms, such as shortness of breath and difficulty breathing, and an asthma pump doesn't alleviate the symptoms, the child requires a nebuliser.



It's important to stay calm to avoid exacerbating their symptoms and obtain immediate medical assistance.

Better understanding your child's asthma action plan and the tools to manage this condition can reduce the likelihood of an emergency room admission.

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Published: June 2023

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Healthy eating on a budget



SOUTH AFRICA:

Non-communicable diseases such as **diabetes**, **high blood pressure (hypertension)** and **heart disease** can increase the risk of death by

→ **51%**

With the right lifestyle changes though these chronic conditions can be managed.



ONE SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IS A HEALTHIER DIET.

Healthy eating doesn't need to be a difficult or expensive process.



FIVE TIPS FOR HEALTHIER EATING ON A BUDGET

1. Cut back on fast foods

It may be easy and convenient, but fast foods are high in fats, salt, and sugars. Therefore, it's not suitable for those living with a chronic condition. Cutting back on fast foods will also save you money, which you can use to buy healthier food options.



2. Buy fruit and vegetables in season

Fruit and vegetables are high in vitamins, minerals, and nutrients that can be beneficial for preventing and managing chronic conditions.

In-season fruit and vegetables aren't only cheaper, but they also provide more nutrition and flavour. For winter, these include:

- Apples
- Oranges
- Pears
- Beetroot
- Cabbage
- Potatoes



3. Invest in legumes

Beans, lentils and chickpeas are versatile foods. They're also affordable and a good source of protein for meals without meat.



4. Buy frozen and canned foods

Frozen and canned foods contain just as many nutrients as fresh food. They last longer and can be cheaper.

Try options such as baked beans, tuna and frozen fruit.



5. Reduce food wastage

SOUTH AFRICA WASTES ABOUT 10 MILLION TONNES

of food each year, and **18%** of this occurs in our homes.

You can reduce food waste by storing your produce correctly (either in the fridge or in a cool, dark place with air circulation). You should also download recipes for using your leftovers.



The economy may be unpredictable, but your health doesn't have to be. With minor changes, you can stay on top of your health – and your wallet.

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Asthma Action Plan



PATIENT NAME: _____

DATE OF BIRTH: _____

DOCTOR NAME: _____

DOCTOR CONTACT NUMBER: _____

DATE: _____

GREEN ZONE 	Take normal medication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No cough or wheeze Can play games and sport normally No sleep disturbance Using reliever less than 3 times a week Peak flow greater than 80% 		
	MEDICINE:	HOW MUCH:	WHEN TO TAKE:	Avoid these triggers:
	Preventer pump		Every day even when I feel well.	
	Reliever pump		Only if I need to, like when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'm wheezing My chest feels tight I'm finding it hard to breathe I'm coughing or ___ min before exercise. 	
Other asthma medicines I take every day:				

YELLOW ZONE 	Follow new instructions and monitor progress	Any of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cough, wheeze or tight chest Can't perform my usual activities (e.g. at work, exercise) Waking up with asthma symptoms Using reliever more than 2 times a week Peak flow between 60%-80% 		
	MEDICINE:	HOW MUCH:	WHEN TO TAKE:	Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If not improved within 24 hours make an emergency appointment to see doctor. Contact your doctor today and let them know you started taking steroids and get an appointment within 24 hours.
	Preventer pump		Continue taking your preventer pump like in the Green Zone.	
	Reliever pump	As needed, up to _____ puffs every 4 hours	Until my symptoms have gone and my peak flow is back to normal.	
Prednisolone (steroid) tablets		Immediately and again every morning for ___ days or until I am fully better.		

RED ZONE 	Call for medical help: Asthma attack	Any of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathing is hard and fast Can't walk, talk or feed easily Severe shortness of breath Reliever pump is not helping Wheezing a lot, or very tight chest, or coughing a lot Peak flow is below 60% 		
	MEDICINE:	HOW MUCH:	WHEN TO TAKE:	Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit up straight. Try to keep calm. Call an ambulance or go to the doctor NOW, even if symptoms get better!
	Reliever pump	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 puff every minute up to 10 times. Use a spacer if you have one. If not better and ambulance takes longer than 15 minutes, repeat: 1 puff every minute up to 10 times. 		
	CALL YOUR DOCTOR OR AMBULANCE			
DOCTOR'S NUMBER:				AMBULANCE'S NUMBER: