



POLMED

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

YOUR CARE POLMED

September 2023

“There is hope,
even when your
brain tells you
there isn’t.”

John Green

Dear Member

There’s no denying the number of challenges we face daily. From loadshedding to the increasing cost of living – all of this adds to our already over-burdened stress loads. Remaining optimistic and prioritising your mental health might seem like a lot. But fret not, we’ve got you.

This month, we’re focusing on mental health with an infographic that unpacks depression in men. If you need extra support, we’ve included information on our Mental Health Programme. We’re also exploring gestational diabetes and sharing why it’s essential to manage HIV and any chronic conditions.

Have a healthy, active and happy month ahead!

YourCare Team

In this issue...

MANAGING DIABETES DURING PREGNANCY

Gestational diabetes is increasing worldwide, and its prevalence in South Africa is estimated at between 1.6% and 25.8%. Managing this condition is vital to the mother and child’s health.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

MANAGING HIV WITH OTHER CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Did you know that almost 30% of individuals living with HIV have at least one other chronic condition? Many chronic medications can have a negative interaction with HIV or its treatment. For this reason, all conditions need to be managed equally well by your medical care team.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

MAKE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH A PRIORITY

POLMED’s Mental Health Programme offers support to members who are diagnosed with mental health conditions such as depression, bipolar mood disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia, and alcohol and substance abuse.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

MEN’S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Poor mental health can affect anyone, but it’s often overlooked in men. With more men dying by suicide in South Africa every year, it’s crucial we know how depression presents in men.

[▶ 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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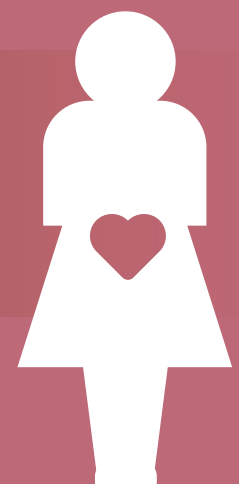
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MANAGING DIABETES DURING PREGNANCY

Gestational diabetes (diabetes that develops during pregnancy) is increasing worldwide, and its prevalence in South Africa is estimated at between

1.6% and 25.8%.



Managing diabetes during pregnancy is essential to avoid extended hospital stays and increased costs – and risks to the health of both mother and child.

WHAT CAUSES GESTATIONAL DIABETES?

During pregnancy, the body undergoes significant changes, some of which may impact its ability to produce sufficient insulin.

The risk for gestational diabetes increases in pregnant women:

- older than 35
- who have a BMI of 30 and higher
- with a family history of diabetes



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

The symptoms aren't always easy to recognise and may be dismissed as the effects of pregnancy.

However, you should look out for the following symptoms and seek help, if necessary:

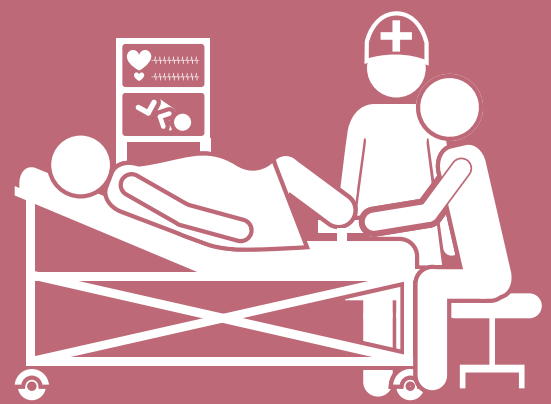
- Increased thirst
- A dry mouth
- Tiredness
- An unusual need to urinate more often
- Genital itching or thrush
- Blurred eyesight



RISKS OF UNMANAGED DIABETES DURING PREGNANCY

Poorly managed diabetes during pregnancy presents several risks:

- An increased risk for C-sections
- Premature labour
- Pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure during pregnancy)
- Type 2 diabetes after pregnancy
- A larger-than-usual baby
- Low blood sugar in your baby
- Jaundice in your baby
- Stillbirth



PREVENTING AND MANAGING GESTATIONAL DIABETES

The first step is diagnosis, so get your blood sugar tested. Other guidelines include:

Follow a healthy diet

Choose healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains and legumes, and exclude alcohol and processed foods.



Regular exercise

Try yoga, walking, swimming or riding a stationary bike with the guidance of your doctor.

Take your prescribed medication

Your doctor will prescribe medication that is both effective and safe for your body.

Not every pregnant woman will develop gestational diabetes, but if you do, visit your doctor regularly to protect your health and that of your unborn baby

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MANAGING HIV WITH OTHER CHRONIC CONDITIONS

STATISTICS INDICATE THAT

19.6%

of South African adults are HIV-positive.



But because almost 30% of these individuals have at least one other condition, **HIV can't be managed in isolation.**

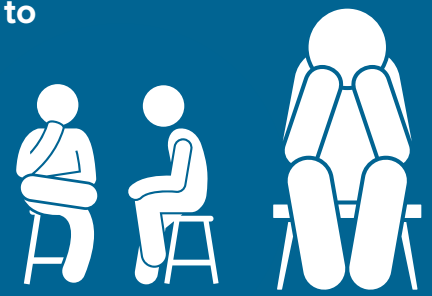
Other chronic medical conditions may impact your HIV and your medication for HIV or HIV itself may affect your other chronic conditions.

Essentially, all your conditions need to be managed equally well for the best outcome.

1. HIV AND DEPRESSION

Those living with HIV are reportedly three times more likely to develop depression. This can make it difficult to seek treatment and follow treatment guidelines.

If you're experiencing depression, getting professional help is important. Also, let your doctor know if you've been prescribed antidepressants as these can interfere with your HIV medication.

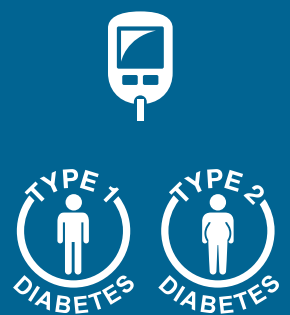


2. HIV AND DIABETES

There are certain HIV medications that those with diabetes will need to avoid.

So, the estimated 9% of HIV-positive individuals who also have diabetes will need to go for regular check-ups.

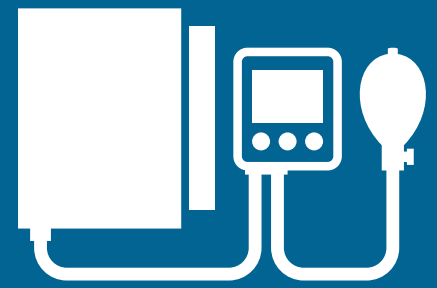
This way, their doctor can test their blood sugar and prescribe the correct treatment.



3. HIV AND HYPERTENSION

Almost 38.6% of those living with HIV also have hypertension (high blood pressure).

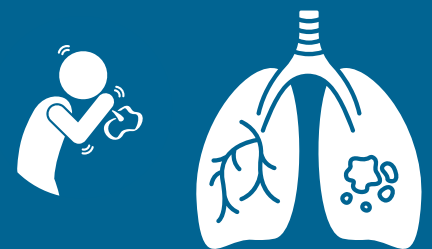
HIV and some HIV medications may trigger inflammation that raises blood pressure. Individuals with both conditions should check their blood pressure regularly to manage hypertension and avoid complications like heart disease.



4. HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS

Nearly 60% of those with tuberculosis (TB) have also been diagnosed with HIV.

While TB can be effectively treated in individuals living with HIV, they need to get tested for it to begin the appropriate treatment.



Managing all your chronic conditions well will help ensure you live a long and healthy life if you're HIV-positive.

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YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS MAKE IT YOUR PRIORITY

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH:



Trauma



History of abuse



Genetic Factors



Family history



Excessive use of alcohol or drugs



Feelings of loneliness or isolation

SOME OF THE TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS:



Substance abuse



Depression



Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Suicidal thoughts



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF AFFECTED MENTAL HEALTH



Low or no energy



Feeling helpless or hopeless



Eating too much



Sleeping too much



Suicidal thoughts



Feeling disconnected



Alcohol and drug abuse



Feeling worried, angry, or scared



Shouting or fighting with family and friends



Inability to cope with daily problems or stress

TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH:



Maintain a healthy diet



Connect with others



Get 8 hours of sleep



Exercise regularly and stay active



Take time out for things you enjoy



Ask for help

Talk to us: Contact POLMED Disease Risk Management department on **0860 765 633** or WhatsApp POLMED at **060 070 2547** or send an email to polpsych@medscheme.co.za

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MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Poor mental health can affect anyone, but it's often overlooked in men.



STATISTICS SUGGEST THAT

in South Africa, men are more likely to die by suicide than women.



DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS IN MEN

Symptoms of depression present differently in men than in women.

For men, symptoms can include:

- Excessive drinking or drug abuse
- Avoiding family or social interactions
- An obsessive increase in work habits
- An increase in controlling or abusive behaviour
- Anger and frustration
- Engaging in risky behaviour, such as gambling or unsafe sex
- Suicidal ideation (suicidal thoughts or ideas)



WHY DON'T MEN TALK ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS?

"While women may be diagnosed with depression more than men, men don't speak about their feelings till it's too late," says Cassey Chambers, operations director for the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG).

The stigma of being perceived as weak is associated with depression and often prevents men from seeking help. And it's this perception that may make men shy away from talking about their mental health challenges.



BOOSTING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Steps towards improved mental health involve seeking **professional help** and **treatment**.

There are also **lifestyle adjustments** that can increase coping skills:

- EXERCISE**
Regular exercise can improve your mood. Aim for 30 minutes or more, three to five days a week.
- EAT WELL**
Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains but low in added sugar, and processed foods and meats.
- AVOID ALCOHOL**
Heavy drinking has been associated with an increased risk of depression.
- GET A HOBBY**
A hobby can benefit your mental health. This could include gardening, journaling, photography and cooking healthy meals.
- SPEND TIME WITH LOVED ONES**
Feeling loved may also encourage you to share your feelings.

It shows true strength to be honest about your feelings, so you can access the support you need. Don't wait until it's too late.

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