



**POLMED**

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

# YOUR CARE POLMED

October 2023

**“Your mental health is everything — prioritise it. Make the time like your life depends on it because it does.”**

Mel Robbins

Dear Member

October plays host to World Mental Health Day, where we raise awareness around mental health issues and challenges worldwide. With current world events taking a bleaker turn, it's essential to take care of ourselves now more than ever. This month, we're sharing tips on how to take care of your mental and physical wellbeing.

In our monthly articles, we unpack ways that you can prioritise and look after your mental health and the importance of proactive care. We look into the importance of sleep for overall wellbeing and share an infographic that explores the link between hair loss and diabetes and the steps you can take

**Have a healthy, active and happy month ahead!**

YourCare Team

## In this issue...

### SLEEP WELL FOR GOOD HEALTH

Only about 30% of South Africans achieve the recommended hours of at least 7 hours a night in their adult years. Do you know how a lack of sleep can affect your health?

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

### TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Cervical cancer remains a significant concern in South Africa. The good news is that early detection of cervical cancer may save your life.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

### MANAGING HAIR LOSS WITH DIABETES

Did you know the average human sheds between 50 and 100 hairs daily? For the 4.2 million South Africans living with diabetes, hair loss can be a challenge they face.

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### MENTAL HEALTH IS A UNIVERSAL RIGHT

Poor mental health costs the South African economy around R19 billion annually due to loss of productivity and absenteeism.

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**FIGHT FOR  
WHAT'S RIGHT**

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

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## SLEEP WELL FOR GOOD HEALTH

While we can enjoy 8 to 10 hours of sleep in our younger years, it's best to



**GET AT LEAST 7 HOURS A NIGHT IN OUR ADULT YEARS.**

Sadly, only about **30%** of South Africans achieve this.



A good night's sleep will leave you refreshed in the morning, help you manage your weight better, improve your mood, and may contribute to healthier-looking skin.



### HOW CAN A LACK OF SLEEP AFFECT YOUR HEALTH?

A lack of quality sleep will make you tired and can be a significant risk factor for non-communicable diseases and infections.

You could be at risk for:



Hypertension  
(high blood pressure)



Type 2 diabetes



Obesity



Depression



Heart disease



Stroke

At the same time, chronic conditions can also affect sleep quality, increasing your risk for health complications.

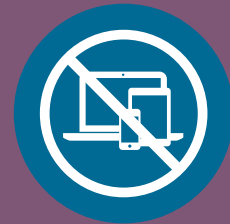
### HOW TO GET BETTER SLEEP

You may think you can sleep for fewer hours and still achieve sleep quality, but this is a bad idea. A lack of sleep will catch up with you.

You can't catch up on lost sleep by lying in on the weekend, so it's important to get enough sleep every night.

#### HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR SLEEPING HABITS:

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and rise at the same time every day, including on weekends.
- Avoid caffeine after 14:00.
- Don't take naps after 15:00.
- Avoid drinking alcohol in the evening.
- Avoid processed foods.
- Keep your bedroom free of devices such as cell phones, laptops and TVs.
- Don't eat large meals before bedtime.
- Have a bedtime routine that calms you – you could try journaling, meditation or yoga.
- Create a sleep haven by keeping your bedroom dark, well-ventilated and at a comfortable temperature.
- Monitor or journal your body's reaction when you're trying to sleep or wake up. Are you cold? What's on your mind?



**Adopting good lifestyle habits can make a major difference to sleep patterns. If you still have difficulty sleeping, you should talk with your doctor.**

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## TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH BOOK YOUR PAP SMEAR TODAY

### CERVICAL CANCER REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN IN SOUTH AFRICA.

The good news is that early detection of cervical cancer may save your life. That's where a Pap smear comes in.



#### WHAT IS A PAP SMEAR?

It's a simple and effective vaginal examination by a trained healthcare provider. During the Pap smear, your healthcare provider collects cells from your cervix to identify abnormal cells.



#### THE ADVANTAGES WHEN ABNORMAL CELLS ARE DETECTED EARLY

There are numerous advantages to the early detection of abnormal cells. It can lead to:

- Successful treatment of the diagnosed condition
- Better health outcomes
- Higher survival rates
- Less invasive/expensive treatment options
- Fertility being preserved
- Overall reproductive health being maintained



#### CERVICAL CANCER AND THE HUMAN PAPILOMAVIRUS

Did you know that most cervical cancer cases globally are related to the human papillomavirus (HPV)? Pap smears may prevent the development of cancer cases as it also detects HPV-related concerns.

#### POLMED benefits for Pap smear screenings

Talk to your healthcare provider about booking your Pap smear and the ideal time for this check to be done.

You can visit the POLMED website at <https://admin.medscheme.co.za/2013/Polmed/> or you can refer to the POLMED member guide to view your option-specific benefits for Pap smear screenings.

**REMEMBER THAT EARLY DETECTION CAN HELP SAVE YOUR LIFE.**

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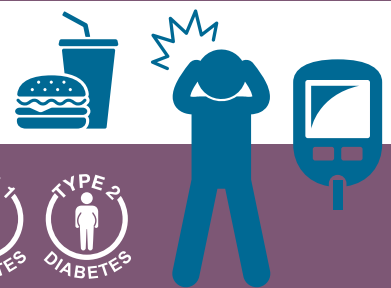
## MANAGING HAIR LOSS WITH DIABETES

**DID YOU KNOW THE AVERAGE HUMAN SHEDS BETWEEN 50 AND 100 HAIRS DAILY?**

This is perfectly normal. Excessive hair loss, on the other hand, isn't.



Factors contributing to significant hair loss include diet, stress and chronic conditions like diabetes.



For the **4.2 million South Africans** living with diabetes, hair loss can be a challenge they face.



### HOW CAN DIABETES AFFECT YOUR HAIR?

- **Type 1 diabetes** increases the risk for autoimmune conditions such as alopecia areata, which causes excessive hair loss.
- **Elevated blood sugar** through poorly managed Type 2 diabetes can increase the risk for hair loss by thinning the hair and making it more fragile.
- **Uncontrolled Type 2 diabetes** can increase levels of cortisol (the stress hormone), disrupting healthy hair growth.
- **Diabetes medication** may affect vitamin B12 and folic acid levels, which can result in hair loss.

### HOW CAN YOU MANAGE HAIR LOSS WITH DIABETES?

WITH THE RIGHT APPROACH, YOU CAN REDUCE YOUR RISK FOR HAIR LOSS.



#### MANAGE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR

Follow a healthy and balanced diet, exercise regularly and take your medication as prescribed.



#### MONITOR YOUR LEVELS OF STRESS

Yoga, journaling, meditation and talk therapy can help you manage your stress levels.



#### DISCUSS YOUR MEDICATION WITH YOUR DOCTOR

If hair loss is a possible side effect of your medication, talk to your doctor about alternative therapy or methods to manage this.



#### USE THE RIGHT HAIR PRODUCTS

The right hair products can promote healthy hair and help reduce the risk of hair loss. Since diabetes can cause dryness and sensitivity, it is best to use shampoos that are gentle on the scalp and moisturising.

Look for shampoos with aloe vera, tea tree oil and vitamin B, which encourage hair growth and alleviate dryness.



#### TRY SUPPLEMENTS

A lack of nutrients may cause hair loss. Taking biotin, zinc, and vitamin E and B12 supplements may help.

**If you notice abnormal hair loss, you should seek the advice of your doctor or dermatologist. They can help you get to the root of the problem and keep you and your locks healthy.**

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## MENTAL HEALTH IS A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT

It's as important to take care of your mental health as it is your physical health.

Poor mental health has not only been linked to increased suicide and risk for heart disease but also costs the South African economy around R19 billion annually due to loss of productivity and absenteeism.

With 10.7% of the population globally living with poor mental health, World Mental Health Month, commemorated in October, aims to raise awareness of the importance of understanding and protecting your mental health.

Here are some tips for boosting your mental health:

### 1. MAKE TIME TO MOVE

Physical activity triggers the release of chemicals in the brain called endorphins, which can help improve your mood. In addition to exercise, you can stay active by dancing, taking walks or gardening.



### 2. SPEND TIME IN NATURE

Spending time in your local park, working in your garden, or even adding plants to your home or office can help relieve stress and boost happiness.



### 3. TRY A DIGITAL DETOX

While smartphones have become an integral part of life, excessive use can increase levels of anxiety and depression. Try uninstalling your social media apps or turning off your notifications for a day to give you and your phone a break.



### 4. SEEK SUPPORT

While **one in three South Africans experience poor mental health**, over 50% don't seek treatment, partly due to the stigma attached. However, there are a range of resources available that can help if you're experiencing mental health challenges.



#### Try these options to get support:

- Use an employee assistance programme at work if you have one.
- Contact a mental health organisation's helpline, such as the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) emergency helpline (0800 567 567).
- Speak to your doctor.
- Reach out to a confidante, be it a friend or relative.

#### 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.

With the proper support, individuals with poor mental health can live a healthy and fulfilled life.

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