

# YOUR CARE POLMED

February 2024

“For happy health, fuel  
yourself with dreams  
and greens.”

Terri Guillemets

Dear Member

It’s February, the month of love! This month, why not show yourself some love by putting your physical and mental health in focus? We know that prevention is better than cure, but how can we apply that to diseases such as cancer?

In February, we mark World Cancer Day, a day to commemorate the 10 million deaths globally. It’s also a time to raise awareness around this disease, which is responsible for around 20 million people falling ill around the world.

But there are ways to protect your health and reduce your cancer risk. Our monthly article shares how you can be proactive in protecting your health. In keeping with the self-love theme, we share an infographic exploring high-functioning depression. Do you or a loved one take Metformin to manage type 2 diabetes? You’ll want to look at our infographic delving into managing the side effects of this medication.

**As always, have a healthy, active and happy month ahead!**

YourCare Team

## In this issue...

### JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

In South Africa, around 85,000 people were diagnosed with cancer in 2019, with almost 44,000 recorded deaths, making cancer the fourth leading cause of mortality in the country.

[READ MORE...](#)

### MANAGING THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF METFORMIN

Any medication can have side effects that can result in non-adherence to treatment and poor diabetes management.

[READ MORE...](#)

### WHAT IS HIGH-FUNCTIONING DEPRESSION, AND DO YOU HAVE IT?

While it’s not a clinical term, high-functioning depression refers to instances where individuals exhibit the symptoms of depression but are still able to function – making it more difficult for them to acknowledge that they need help.

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## JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

In February, we commemorate World Cancer Day, a worldwide initiative that aims to raise awareness around a disease responsible for **20 million new cases and 10 million deaths globally in 2020.**



**Just over a million new cancer cases are reported each year in Africa**, with about 700,000 deaths. In South Africa, around 85,000 people were diagnosed with cancer in 2019, with almost 44,000 recorded deaths, which made cancer the fourth leading cause of mortality in the country.

By 2040, cancer is expected to place an increased burden on health systems, individuals and communities.

This burden is most likely to be felt in low and middle-income countries due to rising populations, increased life expectancy, and lifestyle behaviours.



### HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH AND REDUCING YOUR RISK OF DEVELOPING CANCER.



#### Undergo regular screening tests.

Early detection, through regular screening, saves lives. This includes screening for breast cancer (mammograms), cervical cancer (Pap smears), colon cancer and lung cancer.



#### Get vaccinated

There are vaccines to protect against human papillomavirus (HPV) and hepatitis B. HPV and hepatitis B have been associated with cervical and liver cancer, respectively.



#### Avoid tobacco products

Tobacco use is associated with 40% of all diagnosed cancer cases. Group therapy, relaxation strategies such as yoga and meditation, or registering on a stop-smoking programme can help you to quit tobacco products. POLMED have partnered with GoSmokeFree to support our members in their quitting journey. Visit [www.polmed.co.za](http://www.polmed.co.za) or call **0860 765 633** for more info on this programme.



#### Limit alcohol intake

Of the 7% disease burden associated with alcohol, 3.4% is related to cancer. Setting limits, seeking help, and avoiding triggers such as social events and bars can help cut back on alcohol consumption.



#### Manage your weight

Regular exercise and a healthy, balanced diet won't just manage your weight. They can also reduce your risk of cancer and death from cancer.

**Join the fight against cancer by protecting your health and reducing your risk.**

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## MANAGING THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF METFORMIN

**Over 11% of the South African population is currently living with diabetes.**



Medication is often used to treat diabetes. But like any medication, there can be side-effects that can result in non-adherence to treatment and poor diabetes management. One such medication that is commonly used in diabetes treatment is Metformin



### METFORMIN

Metformin – prescribed to nearly 120 million people worldwide with Type 2 diabetes – works by managing blood glucose levels. It does this by reducing glucose production by the liver, decreasing absorption by the intestines and increasing your body's sensitivity to insulin.

One of the most common side-effects of Metformin is diarrhoea, occurring in over half the number of people who take the medication. Diarrhoea usually presents within the first few weeks of treatment.

#### OTHER METFORMIN SIDE-EFFECTS INCLUDE:



Nausea



Vomiting



Loss of appetite

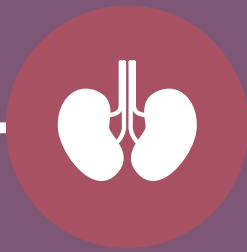
### MANAGING THE SIDE-EFFECTS OF METFORMIN

Taking the medication as prescribed is important for diabetes management.

#### POOR DIABETES MANAGEMENT CAN INCREASE THE RISK FOR:



Heart  
disease



Chronic  
kidney disease



Nerve  
damage



Poor  
vision



Poor  
oral health



**You shouldn't stop your treatment. Rather, speak to your doctor about minimising the impact of the side-effects. Discuss a possible lower dosage or a long-acting formulation which slowly releases the medication into your body. You may also be advised to take Metformin after your meals.**

Side-effects such as diarrhoea can be uncomfortable, but Metformin is an effective way of managing diabetes and has also been found to reduce mortality risk (risk of death) in those living with the condition. Once these side-effects have been dealt with, you can ensure good diabetes management and continue to live a healthy life.

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## WHAT IS HIGH-FUNCTIONING DEPRESSION, AND DO YOU HAVE IT?

With around **25% of the South African population** living with depression,

it's important to recognise the signs and symptoms so you can seek help. These are often overlooked, particularly in people with high-functioning depression.



While it's not a clinical term, high-functioning depression refers to instances where individuals exhibit the symptoms of depression but are still able to function at work, school and home – making it more difficult for them to acknowledge that they need help. It often presents in individuals who are driven and goal-oriented.



### AM I DEPRESSED OR JUST SAD?

Feeling sad is a natural response to a situation and doesn't automatically mean you're depressed. Sadness is an emotion, whereas depression is a mental condition.

SADNESS	DEPRESSION
A feeling of unhappiness that goes away after a few hours or days	Persistent feelings of sadness that last for weeks
Allows you to go on with your life	Affects various aspects of your everyday life due to difficulty concentrating and loss of interest
Can be caused by a life event	Can be caused by genetics, a chemical imbalance or a life event
Is rarely accompanied by other emotions	Can be accompanied by feelings of guilt and worthlessness
Rarely has physical symptoms	Includes physical symptoms such as headaches, sore muscles and digestive problems
May cause you to skip a meal or two	Includes changes in appetite that last longer than two weeks
May cause you to sleep in for one day	Includes disrupted sleep patterns that last longer than two weeks
Doesn't need any special treatment but can be managed by crying, venting or simply talking to a friend	Requires a treatment plan designed by a professional, which may include medication

Depression can have a major impact on your life, regardless of how well you think you're functioning. If you've displayed symptoms associated with depression for at least two weeks, you should consult your doctor for the sake of both your physical and mental health.

POLMED has a Mental health Programme in place. Please reach out to our POLMED Care Managers, who can assist you with managing your condition, on **0860 765 633** or email us at **polpsych@medscheme.co.za**

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