

YOUR CARE POLMED

March 2024

**“The groundwork for
all happiness is good
health.”**

Leigh Hunt

Dear Member

There’s a reason health and wellness are generally lumped together. Physical health and mental wellness are tightly linked – **when you’re not at your physical best, you don’t feel great.** So, let’s start laying the foundations for a happier and healthier March.

With data showing that 42% of adults worldwide are overweight, we’re focusing on healthy and sustainable weight loss this month. No, this isn’t us joining in on toxic diet culture. We all get bombarded with that enough on social media. Our focus is on our members’ overall health and wellness, after all.

This month, we unpack how being overweight can negatively impact your health and increase your risk of developing conditions like type 2 diabetes or hypertension. Our monthly article gives you a few tips on shedding those kilos sustainably and healthily. We also share an infographic unpacking glaucoma and its symptoms.

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

YourCare Team

In this issue...

MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT AND PROTECT YOUR HEALTH.

Excess weight can have a significant impact on your health and affect your quality of life. It puts you at risk of developing chronic medical conditions and makes it more difficult to manage existing conditions.

[➤ READ MORE...](#)

EYES ON THE PRIZE: PREVENTING GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma affects 4.4% of people in Africa, the highest rate in the world. It’s also the leading cause of irreversible blindness globally.

[➤ READ MORE...](#)

UNDERSTANDING DIALYSIS AND YOUR RISKS FOR CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

Kidneys are responsible for removing waste products from your body. Therefore, it’s important to keep your kidneys healthy.

[➤ READ MORE...](#)



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MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT AND PROTECT YOUR HEALTH.

Current statistics suggest that half of the South African population is either overweight or obese.



Excess weight can have a significant impact on your health and affect your quality of life. It puts you at risk of developing chronic medical conditions and makes it more difficult to manage existing conditions.

WHAT'S 5KG?

A weight gain of 5kg has been linked to a 30% increased risk for type 2 diabetes, a 14% increased risk for high blood pressure, an 8% increased risk for cardiovascular disease and a 6% increased risk for obesity-related cancer.

A 10kg weight gain may increase your risk of developing hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, gout and kidney stones.



HOW DOES YOUR WEIGHT AFFECT CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS?

DIABETES:

Obesity has been linked to 24.8% of self-reported cases of type 2 diabetes in South Africa.

HEART DISEASE:

Excess weight puts strain on the heart, and 30% of the South African population has some form of heart disease.

HYPERLIPIDAEMIA:

Obesity can increase the risk of hyperlipidaemia, also known as high cholesterol.

When you have high cholesterol levels, it significantly increases your chances of experiencing a heart attack or stroke.

HYPERTENSION:

77.3% of hypertension cases are linked to obesity or being overweight.

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE, LONG-TERM WEIGHT LOSS

Even losing 5kg can help reduce your risk for chronic medical conditions and improve your sleep.

Sustainable, long-term weight loss will require you to make a few essential lifestyle changes, such as:

1. VISITING YOUR DOCTOR:

Your medical professional will assess your risk and recommend a course of action.

2. MOVING MORE:

Aside from exercising, try to walk more by taking the stairs instead of a lift and standing up from your desk or couch every 30 minutes to encourage movement.

3. EATING MORE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES:

You could add fruit to your meal every morning and include vegetables on your lunch and dinner plates.

4. DRINKING MORE WATER:

Carry around a water bottle to help you keep hydrated.

5. GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP:

Remove devices from your bedroom for better sleep.

6. MANAGING STRESS:

Try journaling or meditation to help manage stress.



Remember to go for your annual health risk assessment at any contracted doctor or pharmacy if you have not done so yet and make a start.

Losing weight can do wonders for your health; small changes can make a big difference. But don't put it off. Your risk for chronic medical conditions increases the longer you leave it.

POLMED has a Weight Management programme. The programme aims to help you start your weight loss journey.

HOW WILL THIS TREATMENT BE FUNDED?

POLMED covers the full cost of the Programme for qualifying members from the Overall Risk at POLMED rates and not from your out-of-hospital (day-to-day) benefits.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Should you require assistance or information or have any questions, you may call POLMED on **0860 765 633** (follow the voice prompts to the Disease Management Programme) between 08:30 and 17:00, Monday to Friday, or send an email to **polmedwmp@medscheme.co.za**

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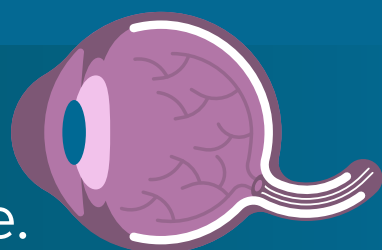
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EYES ON THE PRIZE PREVENTING GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma is a disease of the eye caused by damage to the optic nerve.



Glaucoma affects

4.4% OF PEOPLE IN AFRICA

This is the highest rate in the world.



It's also the leading cause of irreversible blindness globally.



RISK FACTORS FOR GLAUCOMA

Several factors can increase your risk for glaucoma:

- Age (people aged 45 to 65 are at a higher risk)
- Race (particularly African and Indian ethnicity)
- Family history of glaucoma
- Poor blood circulation
- Chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes and hypertension, particularly if poorly managed)
- State of your eyes (such as thin corneas, farsightedness and nearsightedness, or eye injuries)
- Long-term use of steroid medications

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GLAUCOMA

Signs and symptoms of glaucoma can be difficult to detect, especially in the early stages. This makes routine eye examinations even more crucial.

The most common symptoms of glaucoma include:



Eye pain
and pressure



Headaches



Blurred
vision



Red eyes



Nausea

REMEMBER YOUR EYE EXAMINATIONS

Consult your doctor if you experience any symptoms of glaucoma. Your doctor may refer you to an ophthalmologist for an eye examination.

How often do I need an eye examination?

- A routine eye examination is recommended every two years.
- If you have more than one risk factor for glaucoma, an annual examination may be necessary.



While there is currently no cure for glaucoma, early detection will ensure you get the treatment you need to help slow down the disease's progression and prevent vision loss.

Payment of Services for Management of your Condition

Should you be diagnosed with Glaucoma, POLMED has put a Care Plan in place that provides you with specific benefits for the management of your condition. POLMED will pay for the diagnosis, treatment, and care of a number of chronic conditions.

What is a Care Plan?

A Care Plan is a list of the services that POLMED will cover. It details the care you have access to in order to manage your condition.

What if I need more treatment than is listed in my Care Plan?

If you need treatment and care in excess of your Care Plan, a clinical motivation needs to be provided and approved before more services will be covered.

For more information or to submit a motivation, please contact the POLMED Client Service Call Centre on **0860 765 633** or send an email to **polmedapmb@medscheme.co.za**.

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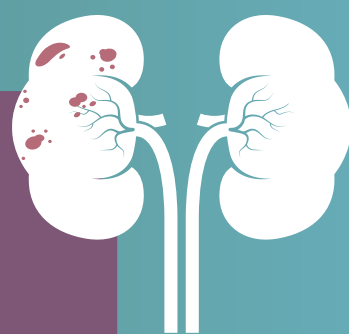


UNDERSTANDING DIALYSIS AND YOUR RISKS FOR CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE

Kidneys are responsible for removing waste products from your body. Therefore, it's important to keep your kidneys healthy.

Unfortunately, about

10.7% of South Africans live with chronic kidney disease – a condition that may require dialysis.



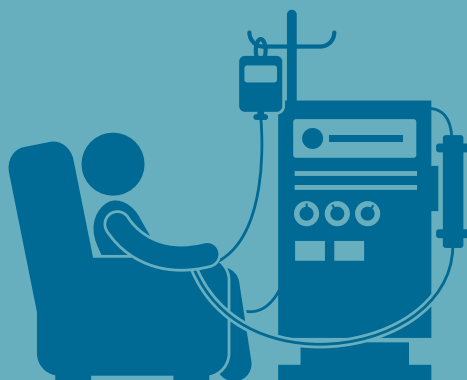
IT'S ESSENTIAL YOU:

- Understand your risks for chronic kidney disease
- Take the necessary steps to protect your kidneys and reduce the need for dialysis

WHAT IS DIALYSIS?

During this process, a tube is attached to a needle in your arm, allowing your blood to flow through the tube and into a machine. Fulfilling the role of your kidneys, the machine filters the blood and sends it back into your arm through a separate tube.

As you **may need to get dialysis up to three times a week**, and each session takes about four hours, this process can be **very disruptive to your daily life**.



CHRONIC CONDITIONS AND KIDNEY HEALTH

Chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure), especially when poorly managed, can affect your kidney health.



DIABETES AND YOUR KIDNEYS

Just over **4 million South Africans** currently live with diabetes, and **40% of them are expected to develop chronic kidney disease within the first 10 years of diagnosis**.



Uncontrolled diabetes raises glucose levels



Raised glucose levels damage blood vessels in the kidneys



Higher risk for chronic kidney disease

HYPERTENSION AND YOUR KIDNEYS

Almost **1 in 3 South African adults** live with hypertension, a significant risk for chronic kidney disease.

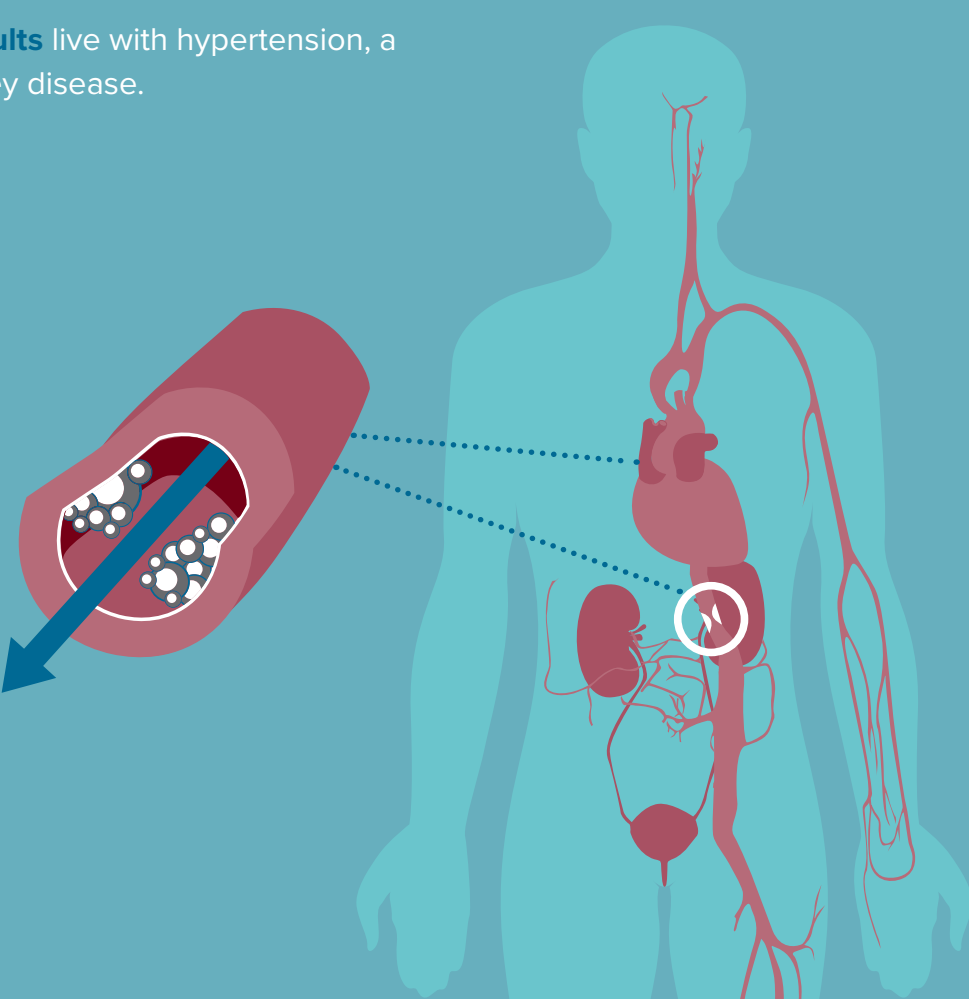
Uncontrolled hypertension narrows blood vessels



Blood flow to the kidneys is reduced



Kidney function is affected



HOW CAN YOU PREVENT CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE?

Adopting the following healthy lifestyle habits can play a significant role in preventing chronic kidney disease:



Manage your chronic conditions

- Take your medicine as prescribed
- Follow your doctor's treatment plan



Quit smoking



Stay hydrated



Exercise regularly



Cut back on alcohol



Ask your doctor to test your kidney function

Your kidneys are essential in maintaining your health. Any issues may require dialysis, which can significantly affect your daily routine. Take care of your kidneys by adopting healthier habits.

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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.

