

YOUR CARE POLMED

May 2024

“Laugh a lot. It clears
the lungs.”

David Hockney

Dear Member

Stop for a minute and take a breath. Inhale deeply, hold for a second and exhale. It feels good, right? With all the stress and busyness in our modern lives, it’s important to just take a moment and breathe deeply. Yes, it does sound a little like woo, taking a breath and being present in the moment. And, no, we’re not about to start telling you how great crystal healing is.

But we are going to focus a little bit on breathing. Why does taking a deep breath make us feel better? In short, it helps regulate our parasympathetic nervous systems and sends a signal to our brains that we’re safe and don’t need to go into fight-or-flight mode.

So, take another deep breath and relax while we dive into lung health this month. With South Africa ranked 25th in the world for the prevalence of asthma and a 20% prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, it’s important to know the difference so you get the right treatment. We share an infographic detailing the differences between these two conditions. We also share an infographic exploring type 1 diabetes management.

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

YourCare Team

In this issue...

TAKE A BREATH: ASTHMA VS COPD

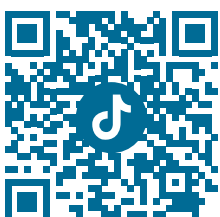
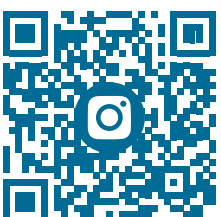
Asthma and COPD are both lung diseases, but understanding the difference between them can ensure that you get the right treatment from your doctor.

[> READ MORE...](#)

A GUIDE TO TYPE 1 DIABETES

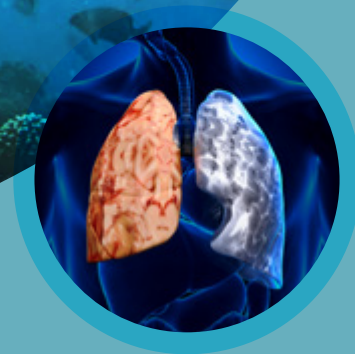
Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas produces little or no insulin. It’s a chronic condition, but you can live an active, healthy life with awareness and proper treatment.

[> READ MORE...](#)



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TAKE A BREATH: ASTHMA VS COPD

South Africa ranks **25th** in the world for the prevalence of asthma and has a **20%** prevalence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).



Asthma and COPD are both lung diseases, but by understanding the difference between them, you can ensure that you get the right treatment from your doctor.



There are some similarities between the two conditions, and some individuals can have both simultaneously.

DIAGNOSIS OF THESE CONDITIONS

Asthma

Usually diagnosed in childhood and causes swelling in the airways that makes it difficult to breathe.



COPD

Often diagnosed later in life and deteriorates over time.

ASTHMA

The swelling in the airways is often triggered by:



Allergies



Physical activity



Cold and dry air



Bad weather



Smoke

Asthma symptoms occur only during an attack, and may include:

- Wheezing (high-pitched whistling or squeaky sound when inhaling)
- Panic
- Tightness in the chest
- Coughing
- Difficulty breathing
- Rattling in the chest



It's important to identify your triggers and keep a pump with you at all times. A preventer pump helps to prevent an asthma attack, while a reliever pump eases asthma symptoms.

COPD

Tobacco smoking is responsible for **30-40% of COPD cases** in low and middle-income countries.

COPD symptoms are constant and include:

- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Chronic cough



With proper treatment, individuals with COPD can survive for 10 to 20 years after diagnosis.

QUIT SMOKING

With both conditions, the most critical intervention is to quit smoking. Smoking can trigger asthma attacks and worsen COPD symptoms.

To quit smoking, try:

- Group therapy
- Exercise
- Eliminating triggers that cause you to smoke
- Stress-relief techniques such as yoga, deep breathing and gardening
- Registering on a stop-smoking programme (POLMED have partnered with GoSmokeFree to support our members in their quitting journey. Visit www.polmed.co.za or call **0860 765 633** for more info on this programme.)



Asthma and COPD are both manageable conditions. By taking your medication as prescribed, you can breathe a little easier.

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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 polmeddiseaseaman@medscheme.co.za with your membership number and contact details.



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A GUIDE TO TYPE 1 DIABETES

Type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas produces little or no insulin.



Because insulin is needed to regulate blood sugar levels, a lack thereof results in high blood sugar levels, increasing the risk of health complications and death.

TYPE 1 DIABETES AFFECTS AROUND

8 MILLION people globally and around

31 000 people in South Africa, with a



6.1% increased prevalence rate in the country every year.

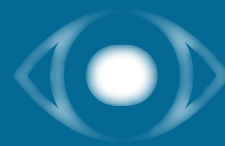
It's normally diagnosed in individuals under the age of 30. Family history may increase your risk of developing type 1 diabetes.



SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of diabetes can appear suddenly and include:

- Frequent urination (frequent full diapers in infants and bedwetting in children)
- Excessive thirst and hunger
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Slow healing of cuts and sores
- Vaginal yeast infections



If you or someone close to you experiences any of these symptoms, consult your doctor for a blood or urine test.

COMPLICATIONS

If left untreated, type 1 diabetes can cause complications such as:



Nerve damage



Sexual dysfunction



Kidney and eye damage



Gum disease



Foot and circulation issues

DIABETES EMERGENCY

Diabetic ketoacidosis is a type 1 diabetes emergency that occurs when the body doesn't get enough insulin. It can be life-threatening. Symptoms include very high glucose values, sweet-smelling breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, and vomiting. If you or someone you know experiences these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.



LIVING WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

Type 1 diabetes is a manageable condition if you stick to the medication and treatment guidelines. These include:

- Regulating insulin levels through insulin pens and injections
- Controlling blood glucose levels with at-home blood glucose tests



Children should be educated to seek help if they are hypoglycaemic (have low blood sugar levels) or hyperglycaemic (have high blood sugar levels).



Type 1 diabetes may be a chronic condition, but with awareness, preparation and the proper treatment, you can live an active, healthy life.

For more information on chronic medication and how to access the chronic medicine benefits, Please contact the POLMED Chronic Medicine Management (CMM) Programme on **0860 765 633** or email **polmedcmm@medscheme.co.za**.

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