

# YOUR CARE POLMED

Septemeber 2024

**“Your now is not  
your forever”**

John Green

Dear Member

Has all that time you’ve been spending dopamining (mining for dopamine) on social media got you wondering if you might have ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)? This mental health disorder is far more than just not being able to sit still or enjoying one too many funny animal videos on TikTok. For some people, it’s like a secret superpower, allowing them to hyperfocus on something or quickly pick up new hobbies. For others, the inability to focus can cause issues at school or work.

The truth is most of us experience some symptoms similar to ADHD sometime in our lives. If what you’re experiencing is recent or something that only occasionally happened in the past, then chances are you don’t have ADHD. If you’re not convinced or suspect that a child in your care might have ADHD, our monthly article is something to hyperfocus on.

If ADHD is not something that’s close to your heart, our infographic on diabetes and heart disease will get your blood pumping. As World Heart Day is 29 September, we’re exploring the link between diabetes and heart disease and how you can protect your heart. We also share an infographic that unpacks Alzheimer’s disease, one of the most common causes of dementia.

**We hope that you have a happy, healthy month ahead!**

YourCare Team

## In this issue...

### DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE: A DUAL THREAT TO YOUR HEALTH

If diabetes is uncontrolled, it can increase the risk for many other conditions. One of these conditions is heart disease, which affects around 30% of the South African population.

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### PAYING ATTENTION TO ADHD

The most common mental health condition in children, and a condition affecting around 5% of South African adults aged between 20 and 50, is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

[> READ MORE...](#)

### UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Responsible for up to 70% of all dementia cases, Alzheimer’s affects over 500,000 South Africans over the age of 65.

[> READ MORE...](#)



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## DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE: A DUAL THREAT TO YOUR HEALTH

If diabetes is uncontrolled, it can increase the risk for many other conditions. One of these conditions is heart disease, which affects around



**30% OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION.**

With **World Heart Day** commemorated on 29 September, we spotlight the link between diabetes and heart disease:



Which is among the **top five** leading causes of death in South Africa.

### HOW CAN DIABETES AFFECT YOUR HEART HEALTH?

Around **4.2 million** adults in South Africa are living with diabetes.

Those with diabetes are twice as likely to develop heart disease than those without it, as diabetes can lead to:

**High levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol**

**Low levels of HDL (good) cholesterol**

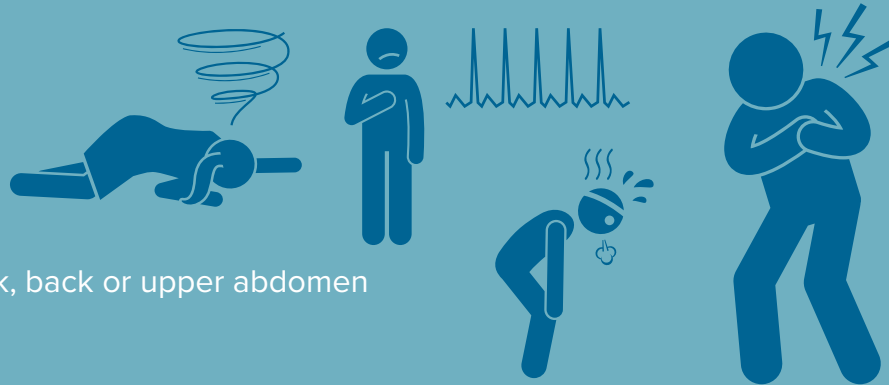
**Damage to blood vessels, increasing the risk for high blood pressure**

**High cholesterol** and **high blood** pressure are both risk factors for heart disease.

### SYMPTOMS OF POOR HEART HEALTH

If you're living with diabetes, you should be aware of the following symptoms of poor heart health:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Lightheadedness
- Fainting
- Rapid heartbeat
- Pain in one or both arms, neck, back or upper abdomen
- Nausea
- Extreme fatigue



### HOW CAN YOU MANAGE DIABETES FOR BETTER HEART HEALTH?

#### 1. KEEP YOUR FOLLOW-UP VISITS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

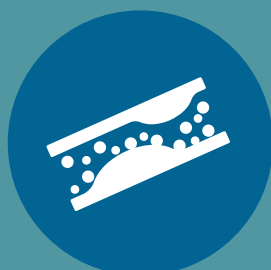
Your healthcare provider will confirm if your diabetes is controlled and that you're at a lower risk for heart disease through various checks, including:



HbA1c tests to monitor blood sugar levels



Blood pressure tests



Cholesterol tests



Eye tests

#### 2. ADOPT HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS

Adopting a healthy lifestyle can help you manage diabetes and simultaneously reduce your risk for heart disease.

**You should:**



Take your medicine as prescribed



Enjoy regular exercise



Follow a healthy, balanced diet



Manage stress



Quit smoking



Limit your intake of alcohol



Manage your weight

**Diabetes and heart disease are closely linked. Managing diabetes can reduce your risk for heart disease.**

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## PAYING ATTENTION TO ADHD

The most common mental health condition in children, and a condition affecting around **5%** of South African adults aged between **20 and 50**, is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).



This condition can have a significant impact on quality of life – for both the individual with ADHD and their family.

### COMMON ADHD SYMPTOMS



#### THE MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- Trouble focusing or concentrating on tasks
- Impulsivity
- Being forgetful about completing tasks
- Hyperactivity
- Being easily distracted
- Difficulty sitting still
- Talking excessively
- Interrupting people

### THE IMPACT OF ADHD



#### ADHD CAN INCREASE THE RISK OF DEVELOPING OTHER CONDITIONS (COMORBIDITIES), SUCH AS:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Major depressive disorder
- Bipolar mood disorder
- Personality disorders
- Conduct disorders (e.g. rule-breaking and aggressive behaviour)

Families of children with ADHD may also experience financial and emotional strains or changes in their relationships.

### WHAT CAUSES ADHD?

The source of ADHD is yet to be understood, but genetics (qualities and characteristics passed on from one generation to another by means of genes), drug and alcohol use during pregnancy, and exposure to environmental toxins are considered risk factors.

### HOW IS ADHD DIAGNOSED?

There is no single test to diagnose ADHD definitively. To confirm an ADHD diagnosis, doctors typically assess the individual's symptoms over six months.

The condition is categorised into three types:



1

#### PREDOMINANTLY INATTENTIVE:

Individuals fail to focus, finish tasks or follow instructions.



2

#### PREDOMINANTLY HYPERACTIVE-IMPULSIVE:

Individuals display hyperactive and impulsive behaviour.



3

#### COMBINED HYPERACTIVE-IMPULSIVE AND INATTENTIVE:

This is the most common type.

### TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR ADHD

While there is no cure for ADHD, treatment usually includes medicine, therapy and the adoption of healthy lifestyle habits.



#### MEDICINE:

The medicine works to improve impulses and actions.



#### THERAPY:

Therapy can assist in monitoring and managing ADHD-related behaviour.



#### HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS:

Healthy lifestyle habits such as a more nutritious diet, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, limiting screen time and spending time outdoors may help ease ADHD symptoms.

**ADHD is a serious condition that, if left unmanaged, can be challenging for both the individual living with ADHD and their family.**

If you recognise the signs and symptoms, visit your healthcare provider for an evaluation. You or your loved one can receive the correct treatment to manage symptoms with a diagnosis.

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## UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alzheimer's disease is responsible for  
**60% TO 70% OF ALL CASES OF DEMENTIA.**



Alzheimer's affects over  
**500,000 SOUTH AFRICANS AGED 65 YEARS OR OLDER.**



### MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Despite its prevalence rate, there are misconceptions about this condition. This includes:

#### THE BELIEF THAT YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN:

While there is no cure, **40%** of dementia cases can be prevented, and **60%** can be delayed by almost five years – if caught early.

#### YOU ONLY EXPERIENCE ISSUES WITH YOUR MEMORY:

While Alzheimer's includes memory loss, it also affects your language skills as the disease progresses. Later on, your reading and writing abilities are also affected.

### SYMPTOMS DURING THE THREE STAGES OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alzheimer's symptoms become worse over time (over several years), so the signs may not always be easily recognisable.

#### EARLY-STAGE SYMPTOMS

**Memory loss:**  
Misplacing items  
Repetitively asking the same questions  
Forgetting recent conversations or events  
Forgetting the names of places and objects  
Difficulty thinking of the right word  
Difficulty making decisions

#### MIDDLE-STAGE SYMPTOMS

Increased confusion and disorientation  
Impulsive or obsessive behaviour  
Changes in sleep  
Problems with speech or language  
Mood swings  
Hallucinations  
Delusions and suspicions about friends and family

#### LATE-STAGE SYMPTOMS

Difficulty eating  
Difficulty swallowing  
Severe weight loss  
Loss of speech  
Urinary and bowel incontinence  
Short and long-term memory problems  
Difficulties with mobility

If you or a family member experiences some of these symptoms, it's essential that you consult your doctor as soon as possible to help ensure treatment is received early.

### HOW CAN I PREVENT OR DELAY ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE?

Adopting healthy lifestyle habits can help prevent, and delay the progression of Alzheimer's. Healthy habits can also reduce the risk for chronic conditions that contribute to Alzheimer's.

#### HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS INCLUDE:



Exercising regularly



Following a healthy diet



Limiting alcohol intake



Not smoking



Getting sufficient sleep



Maintaining strong social relationships



Engaging in brain activities such as reading, jigsaw puzzles and crosswords

Managing Alzheimer's can be a challenge, for both patients and caregivers. Understanding the condition better and an early diagnosis can help you plan for the future.

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