



POLMED

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE



YOUR CARE POLMED

November 2024

**“Healthy is an outfit
that looks different on
everybody.”**

Anonymous

Dear Member

The festive season and December are around the corner! And while you might be planning your celebrations and where to go, remember to take a moment to focus on your health. Whether you’re doing the staycation thing or travelling to visit loved ones, do those small things that will keep your health goals on track.

Go for walks – on the beach or explore your neighbourhood, have a game of garden soccer with your kids, drink water to keep cool and hydrated, and remember your SPF – even when it’s cloudy. Most importantly, remember to take your chronic medication as prescribed by your doctor.

While we collectively count down the days until the holiday vibes are in full swing, remember that 1 December is World AIDS Day, where we spread awareness of both HIV and AIDS. If you have been put at risk of contracting HIV, speak to your doctor about Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). Our monthly article explores what you need to know about PEP, while our infographics unpack the benefits of natural birth and shine a light on World Diabetes Day.

As always, we wish you a healthy, happy month ahead.

YourCare Team

In this issue...

WHY CONSIDER A NATURAL BIRTH OVER C-SECTION?

A caesarean section (C-section) can be a life-saving option for mothers experiencing complications during childbirth. But C-sections aren’t always necessary.

[> READ MORE...](#)

WORLD DIABETES DAY: A CALL TO ACTION

In November, we commemorate World Diabetes Day, not only to raise awareness about diabetes but also to promote the prevention and management of the condition.

[> READ MORE...](#)

ACT FAST, STAY SAFE!

Secure Your Health with HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP).

[> READ MORE...](#)



YOUR CARE POLMED

November 2024



WHY CONSIDER A NATURAL BIRTH OVER C-SECTION?

A caesarean section (C-section) can be a life-saving option for mothers experiencing complications during childbirth. But C-sections aren't always necessary.

SOUTH AFRICA HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST C-SECTION RATES IN THE WORLD.



The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a rate of

10-15%

SOUTH AFRICA'S RATE IS:

26.2% in public hospitals

76.8% in private hospitals



WHEN IS A C-SECTION NECESSARY?

Your doctor might recommend a C-section if you have a high-risk condition such as gestational diabetes, with concerns about the baby's size. This procedure may be needed to address birthing risks such as prolonged labour, abnormal positioning, birth defects, foetal distress, or placental issues.



ARE C-SECTIONS SAFE?

ALL SURGERIES CARRY RISKS. WITH C-SECTIONS, THE RISKS INCLUDE:

- Increased risk for ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy that happens outside the uterus), stillbirth and preterm birth in later pregnancies
- If the next pregnancy occurs close to the last C-section, a natural birth may not be possible as the surgical scar is still fresh and may open
- Risk of complications such as bladder injury, intestinal injury and death



Babies born via C-section also face an increased risk for asthma, allergies, late childhood obesity and poor gut health.

BENEFITS OF NATURAL BIRTH

A natural birth may have complications, but the benefits for both mother and child are numerous. They include:

- Shorter recovery time
- Improved successful breastfeeding
- Reduced likelihood of future complications
- Improved immune function in babies
- Lower chance of respiratory conditions in babies



How to obtain authorisation for your delivery

It is important that you obtain pre-authorisation for delivery from 32 weeks of pregnancy. Please contact POLMED for a pre-authorisation number by calling the Client Service Call Centre on **0860 765 633** or emailing **Polmedauths@medscheme.co.za**.

To speed up the process, please ensure you have the following information handy:

1. POLMED membership number
2. Healthcare provider's practice number
3. Hospital practice number
4. Date of admission and possible discharge date
5. Diagnosis (ICD-10) codes and procedure codes
6. Failure to obtain a hospital pre-authorisation may result in an R5 000 co-payment

Giving birth is a natural experience and C-sections aren't always the best option. It's important to discuss both options with your doctor. Unless a C-section is medically advised for the mother or child, natural birth is the best way to welcome a child into the world.

For all maternity related queries, please contact us on **Polmedmaternity@medscheme.co.za** or on **0860 765 633** (Option 8), operating hours are between 08h30 and 17h00.

Are you pregnant and on the Aquarium option?

POLMED has a Hospital Network in place for Aquarium option. It is important that you make use of a hospital that is listed on the Hospital DSP Network. Using a non-Network hospital may result in an R15 000 co-payment.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE:

A co-payment of R10 000 will be applied should you have an elective caesarean section. POLMED will consider waiver of the co-payment in cases where the caesarean section was an emergency or was/is for clinical reasons. A clinical motivation including evidence will need to be provided showing there was clinical need for the caesarean section. This evidence will be reviewed and vetted before the co-payment is waived.

REFERENCES:

- <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-11-11-south-africas-high-rates-of-caesarean-section-whats-happening-in-the-private-sector/>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-RHR-15.02>
- <http://www.samj.org.za/index.php/samj/article/view/13032/9407>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10196217/>
- https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/161442/WHO_RHR_15.02_eng.pdf
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/c-section-reasons>
- <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-11-11-is-sas-caesarean-section-rate-too-high-in-the-public-sector-yes-and-no/>
- <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/why-you-should-carefully-weigh-c-section-against-a-vaginal-birth>
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/23097-vaginal-delivery>
- Nozipho Mahlangu, professional nurse and certified midwife

Published: November 2024

YOUR CARE POLMED

November 2024



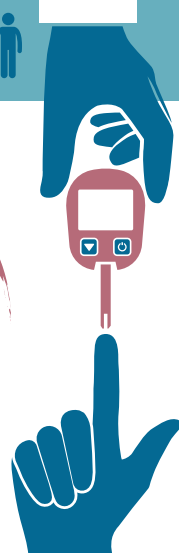
WORLD DIABETES DAY: A CALL TO ACTION

DIABETES IS EXPECTED TO
AFFECT **ONE BILLION PEOPLE**
BY 2050



In November, we commemorate **World Diabetes Day**, not only to raise awareness about diabetes, but also to promote the prevention and management of the condition.

By understanding the impact of untreated diabetes, we can make a difference to our health - and address a global crisis.



AM I AT RISK?



Type 1 diabetes is a chronic autoimmune condition that prevents the pancreas from making insulin. It can't be prevented.



Type 2 diabetes, on the other hand, can be prevented. With Type 2 diabetes, the body can't use insulin properly and blood sugar levels become too high.

It's important to understand the risk factors, which include:



Family history

Individuals with a family history of diabetes are three times more likely to develop diabetes than those without.



Gender

South African women are more likely to develop diabetes than men.



Hypertension and elevated blood glucose levels



Race

Diabetes is most prevalent among Indians, followed by coloureds, and then black Africans.



Sedentary (inactive) lifestyle

Leading an inactive lifestyle could increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes and make managing type 1 more challenging. If you'd like help getting active, our Weight Management Programme consists of biokineticist sessions to support your wellness journey.

Call POLMED on **0860 765 633** (follow the voice prompts to the Disease Management Programme), or email polmedwmp@medscheme.co.za for more info.



Smoking

Smokers have a 30%-40% higher chance of developing diabetes than non-smokers.

As a POLMED member, you can enroll on our smoking cessation programme called GoSmokeFree by accessing the HealthCraft website on www.gosmokefree.co.za. This is offered to you at no additional charge.

DO I HAVE DIABETES?

Symptoms of diabetes include:



Increased hunger



Frequent urination



Ongoing fatigue



Persistent thirst



Losing weight without trying

Screening for diabetes

It's estimated that **45.4% of the people in South Africa** who have diabetes, don't know it.



Undiagnosed diabetes can lead to complications such as **vision loss, kidney damage** and **limb amputations**.

In the event that you are diagnosed with diabetes, fear not—POLMED has you covered.

Early detection of diabetes can save lives. This November, consult your doctor to be screened for the condition, which can be done with a simple finger-prick test. Knowing your blood sugar levels can help you better manage your health.

POLMED uses a process called disease authorisation to approve the treatment of your chronic condition as a whole and not just a single medication. This gives you access to a whole list of pre-approved medication for your condition, which is referred to as a basket.

When you need to change or add a new medication for your condition, just take your new prescription to your pharmacy, and they will see if it is linked to your existing condition basket. If the new prescription is not linked, contact the Chronic Medicine Management Programme on **0860 765 633** with your prescription details.

REFERENCES:

- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9843502/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9210144/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8199430/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10218408/>
- <https://www.verywellhealth.com/addressing-sedentary-lifestyle-with-type-2-diabetes-6606484>
- <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/health-effects-tobacco-use/how-smoking-can-increase-risk-and-affect-diabetes>
- https://www.idf.org/index.php?option=com_attachments&task=download&id=2642:WDD2021_SOUTH_AFRICA_PR_Final
- <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/signs-symptoms/index.html>
- <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/diabetes/type-2-diabetes/>
- <https://alllife.co.za/diabetes/living-with-diabetes/testing-monitoring/>

Published: November 2024

YOUR CARE POLMED

November 2024



ACT FAST, STAY SAFE: SECURE YOUR HEALTH WITH HIV POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)!

HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is a critical emergency intervention for individuals who may have been exposed to HIV. As a POLMED medical scheme member, you have access to this vital treatment, which can significantly reduce the risk of HIV infection if started promptly.



WHAT IS PEP?



PEP involves taking antiretroviral medications for 28 days after a potential exposure to HIV. It is designed to prevent the virus from taking hold in the body. PEP is most effective when started within 72 hours of exposure, so immediate action is crucial.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CONSIDER PEP?

PEP is recommended if you have had a potential exposure to HIV, such as:



Unprotected sex with an HIV-positive or unknown-status partner



Needle-sharing during drug use



Occupational exposure (e.g., needlestick injury in healthcare settings)



Sexual assault

HOW TO ACCESS PEP AS A POLMED MEMBER



IMMEDIATE ACTION

If you believe you have been exposed to HIV, seek medical attention immediately. Time is of the essence, and PEP should be started within 72 hours of exposure.



VISIT A DOCTOR

Go to the nearest emergency room or contact your doctor within the POLMED network. Inform them about the potential exposure and request PEP.



HIV TESTING

Before starting PEP, you will need to undergo HIV testing to confirm your current HIV status. A pre-and post-counselling session needs to be performed. This is to ensure you are HIV-negative before beginning the treatment.



PRESCRIPTION AND GUIDANCE

If PEP is deemed appropriate, your doctor will prescribe the medication and provide instructions on how to take it. Adherence to the medicine is crucial for effectiveness.

SIDE EFFECTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

PEP is generally well-tolerated, but some individuals may experience side effects such as nausea, fatigue, and headaches. These side effects are usually temporary and manageable. It is important to discuss any concerns with your doctor.



FOLLOW-UP CARE

After completing the 28-day PEP regimen, follow-up HIV testing is necessary to confirm the treatment's success. Your doctor will schedule these tests and provide ongoing support and counselling as needed.



COST AND COVERAGE

As a POLMED member, the cost of PEP is typically covered under the HIV/AIDS management program. This ensures that you can access this emergency treatment without additional financial burden. For specific details on coverage, refer to your POLMED benefits guide or contact POLMED customer service.

PEP is a powerful tool in preventing HIV infection after potential exposure. As a POLMED medical scheme member, you can access this life-saving treatment. If you or someone you know may have been exposed to HIV, seek medical attention immediately and ask about PEP. Quick action can make all the difference.

Stay Informed, Stay Protected!

REFERENCES:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/pep/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/nexus/hcp/pep/index.html>
- <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/hiv-prevention/using-hiv-medication-to-reduce-risk/post-exposure-prophylaxis>

Published: November 2024

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.