



POLMED

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE



YOUR CARE POLMED

March 2025

**“Autumn is a second
spring when every leaf
is a flower.”**

Albert Camus

Dear Member

Autumn is coming, and that thought alone might have you longing for long summer days outside in the sunshine. Or you're thankful that the oppressive heat is over and look forward to cooler nights without those pesky mosquitos!

Whatever your thoughts and feelings are towards the change of season, it's always a great time to reflect on your health goals. So, if you're planning on shedding a few kilos or want to get a handle on your health and do those preventative screening tests, now's the time to do it!

On that note, our March issue contains articles and infographics to help you on your health and wellness journey. We explain how you can empower yourself against HIV, share the facts about TB, examine the warning signs for glaucoma, and discuss World Obesity Day.

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

Regards,
YourCare Team

In this issue...

EMPOWER YOURSELF AGAINST HIV

HIV remains a significant public health challenge in South Africa, with one of the highest prevalence rates globally. However, advancements in medical science have provided effective tools to combat this epidemic. One such tool is Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP).

> [READ MORE...](#)

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Numerous studies have shown that being obese or overweight has dangerous health consequences. With 4 March being Obesity Day, we're sharing information on our Weight Management Programme to support members' weight loss journeys.

> [READ MORE...](#)

GLAUCOMA: WHY EYE EXAMS MATTER

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of preventable blindness. However, early detection can slow the disease's progression and prevent vision loss. We share the signs and symptoms you should know to mark Glaucoma Week (9 – 15 March).

> [READ MORE...](#)

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

To mark World Tuberculosis Day on 24 March, we share some signs and symptoms you should know. Remember, TB is curable when detected early.

> [READ MORE...](#)





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EMPOWER YOURSELF AGAINST HIV: DISCOVER THE LIFE-SAVING BENEFITS OF PREP TODAY!

HIV remains a significant public health challenge in South Africa, with one of the highest prevalence rates globally. However, advancements in medical science have provided effective tools to combat this epidemic.

One such tool is Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), a preventive measure for individuals at high risk of HIV infection.

WHAT IS PrEP?

PrEP involves taking a daily antiretroviral pill that contains a fixed-dose combination. When taken consistently, PrEP can reduce the risk of HIV infection by up to 99% in individuals who are at high risk.



WHO SHOULD CONSIDER PrEP?

PrEP is recommended for individuals who are HIV-negative but at substantial risk of HIV infection.



People with
HIV-positive
sexual partners



Individuals with
multiple sexual
partners



Sex workers



People who
inject drugs



Men who have
sex with men
(MSM)

HOW TO GET PrEP

As a member of Polmed, the HIV programme gives you access to this life-saving medication.

To start PrEP, individuals need to visit a doctor for an HIV test and a discussion about their risk factors. If PrEP is deemed appropriate, the doctor will prescribe the medication and guide adherence and follow-up testing.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While PrEP is highly effective, it is not without challenges. Adherence to the daily regimen is crucial for its effectiveness. Additionally, potential side effects are concerns, although these are generally mild and manageable. Education and awareness campaigns are essential to address misconceptions and encourage uptake.

PrEP represents a powerful tool in the fight against HIV. By reducing the risk of infection among high-risk populations, PrEP can help curb the spread of HIV and move the country closer to achieving its goal of an AIDS-free generation. If you or someone you know is at risk, consider speaking to a doctor about PrEP today.

Stay informed, stay protected!

REFERENCES:

- <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/elibrary/updated-guidelines-provision-oral-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep-persons-substantial-risk>
- <https://sahivsoc.org/Files/PrEP%20guidelines%202020.pdf>
- <https://knowledgehub.health.gov.za/system/files/elibdownloads/2022-08/PrEP%20Guidelines%20Update%2012%20%20Nov%20%202021%20Final.pdf>

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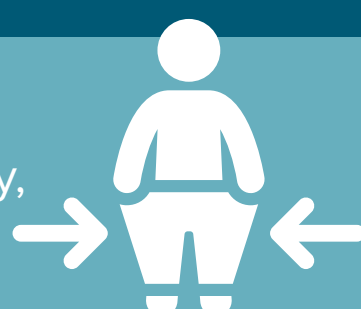
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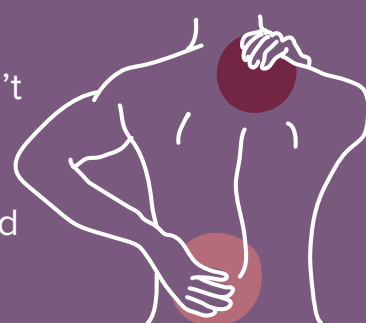
WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

POLMED is offering qualifying members an opportunity to lose excess weight in a healthy, sustainable way – under the guidance of biokineticists.



Numerous studies have shown that being obese or overweight has dangerous health consequences. It substantially increases the risk of morbidity from at least 15 conditions including hypertension, abnormal cholesterol levels, type-2 diabetes, coronary artery disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnoea and respiratory problems, as well as cancers of the endometrium, breast, prostate, and colon.

Being overweight also places considerable strain on the joints, often resulting in orthopaedic surgery. And if this isn't enough, body weight is associated with an increase in mortality from all causes. In addition, obese patients may suffer from social stigmatisation and discrimination, coupled with mental health issues.



POLMED WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

This has led POLMED to introduce the Weight Management Programme – a programme specifically designed for qualifying members with a high BMI and waist circumference.

Under this programme, members will participate in a 12-week, biokineticist-led intervention plan that will give them access to a dietician and behavioural psychologist with the goal to lose the excess weight and lead healthier lives. Once the programme is completed, ongoing advice and monitoring will also be made available to the member.

WHO QUALIFIES FOR THE PROGRAMME?

POLMED members within the following parameters will be eligible for the programme:



BMI ≥ 30 kg/m², or



Men with a waist circumference ≥ 102 cm, or



Women with a waist circumference ≥ 88 cm, or



Other cases identified by a general practitioner or BASA biokineticist supported by a motivation, e.g. member with a BMI between 25.0 kg/ m² and 29.9 kg/m with diabetes and comorbidities.

HOW IT WORKS

The weight management programme runs over 12 weeks (three months) and entails:



Once a member or beneficiary has been identified as suitable for the weight management intervention, their GP is notified electronically that their patient has been enrolled on the weight management programme;



Management by a BASA biokineticist which includes:

- Three (3) one-on-one consultations with the biokineticist;
- Referral to a dietician and/or psychologist for two (2) consultation if necessary; and
- The biokineticist submits electronic reports to the member's GP and POLMED after each interaction.



Self-monitoring; and



At the end of the programme, POLMED will contact the member to get feedback and conduct a discussion on health outcomes.

Marine members have access to the obesity care plan after the Weight Management Programme has been completed.

You may call us 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

DISCLAIMER: This document is a summary for information purposes only and does not supersede the rules of the Scheme. In the event of any discrepancy between this summary and the Rules, the Rules will prevail. A copy of the Rules is available on request.

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GLAUCOMA: WHY EYE EXAMS MATTER



Glaucoma screening is covered from your preventative care benefit every 3 years

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of preventable blindness. However, early detection can slow down the disease's progression and prevent vision loss.



Glaucoma affects:

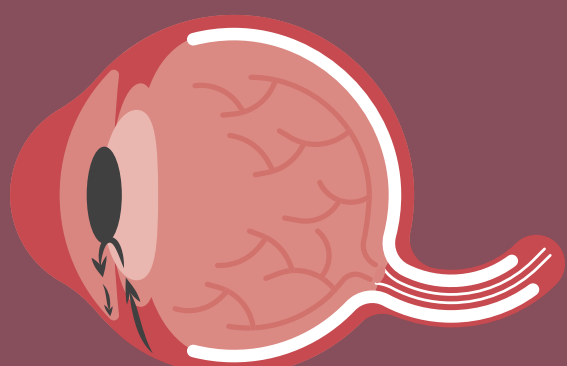
7.7 MILLION PEOPLE GLOBALLY



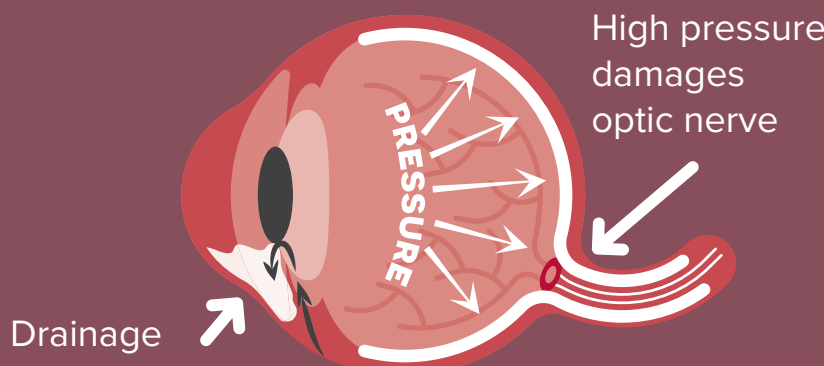
± 4.5% OF SOUTH AFRICANS



WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?



Normal eye



Glaucoma

Glaucoma is an eye condition whereby increased pressure damages your eye's optic nerve. Your optic nerve is vital for good vision.

This increased pressure is typically caused by fluid in the eye not draining properly, thus damaging the optic nerve.

RISK FACTORS FOR GLAUCOMA

Although glaucoma can affect anyone, you are at higher risk if you:

- Are over the age of 40
- Are of African ethnicity
- Have a family history of glaucoma
- Have poor blood circulation
- Are diagnosed with a chronic condition, such as diabetes or high blood pressure (hypertension)
- Have poor eye health (thin corneas, farsightedness and nearsightedness, high eye pressure or eye injuries)
- Are a long-term user of steroid medicine

SILENT THIEF OF SIGHT

Glaucoma typically doesn't have any warning symptoms, making it hard to detect in the early stages. **It often goes undetected until vision is seriously impaired.**

This is why regular eye examinations (which include measuring eye pressure) are so important, especially if you have a chronic condition such as diabetes.

Furthermore, you should schedule an eye test immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms:



Eye pain or pressure



Migraines



Blurred vision



Red eyes



Blind spots

REMEMBER YOUR EYE EXAMINATIONS

It's advisable to have a standard eye screening test every two years, but you may need to do this annually if you have more than one of the risk factors for glaucoma. Consult your doctor for guidance if you experience any symptoms.



While glaucoma currently has no cure, early diagnosis and treatment can help preserve your sight.

You can register glaucoma as a chronic condition.

The medication needs to be prescribed by an ophthalmologist (eye specialist).

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.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>
- <https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/eye-conditions-and-diseases/glaucoma>
- <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/glaucoma>
- <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-glaucoma>
- <https://www.aao.org/healthy-eyes/eye-and-vision-conditions/glaucoma>
- <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diagnostics/22514-glaucoma-tests>
- <https://www.nature.com/articles/eye2017291>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/glaucoma/>

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TB AWARENESS TB IS CURABLE. KNOW YOUR FACTS.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF TB



Unintended
weight loss



Night
sweats



Loss of
appetite



Fever



Fatigue



Coughing that
lasts three weeks
or more



Coughing
up blood



Chest pain or
pain when
breathing and
coughing

Contact your GP should you experience any of the above symptoms. If you test positive, remember TB is curable with adherence to your treatment plan and following a healthy diet.

TB TREATMENT

If you are diagnosed with TB, remember that your medicine must be taken as directed by your doctor or nurse. You will probably need to take several medicines as part of your treatment plan, as the bacteria that causes TB is hardy. Successful treatment can take a while. In fact, it takes at least six months for medication to treat a TB infection and eliminate all TB-causing bacteria completely.



You might start feeling better after only a few weeks of treatment, but remember that you will still be infected with TB. It's, therefore, vital that you continue to take your medication to avoid your symptoms returning and your infection becoming resistant to treatment.

TB SCREENING AND COVER WITH POLMED

To combat TB successfully, we encourage all members to use the Scheme's screening and testing services regularly. Should you test positive, the Scheme will pay for your chronic medication for TB. Remember, early detection can lead to successful treatment and prevention.

Many people with TB are also living with HIV, as TB predominantly impacts people whose immune systems have been weakened. Should you be living with HIV and are also suffering from TB, we encourage you to enrol on the Scheme's HIV Management Programme, where your TB treatment will also be covered.

In addition, all your treating doctor's consultations and special investigations will be funded by POLMED as per the Scheme Rules.

If we all work together, we can end this deadly virus!

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 **WhatsApp POLMED** at **060 070 2547** or send an email to **polmeddiseaseman@medscheme.co.za** with your membership number and contact details.