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OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

YOUR CARE POLMED

June 2025

"Real strength means taking care of yourself"

Anonymous

POLMED Member

True strength isn't about staying silent or pushing through alone. It's about taking meaningful steps—like asking for help, breaking harmful habits, managing your health, and getting tested.

Taking action is a powerful form of courage—and it's the first step toward healing and growth..

We're putting men's health front and center—with inspiring stories, informative infographics, and practical tools to help you take control. Whether it's breaking harmful habits, managing stress, anxiety, or diabetes, or taking charge of your sexual health—this is your moment to invest in your well-being.

Whether it's for yourself or the men in your life, this month is about showing up - fully, fiercely, and without shame.

As always, we hope you have a happy and healthy month.

Yours in health,
The YourCare Team

In this issue...

MIND OVER SUGAR: COPING WITH STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DIABETES

For the over 4 million South Africans currently living with diabetes, there are more than just physical challenges. Managing the condition involves making daily lifestyle changes and modifications, which can also take an emotional toll.

READ MORE...

MEN WHO PRIORITISE THEIR HEALTH MAKE STRONG, SMART CHOICES: REGULAR CHECKUPS

South African women are outliving their male counterparts by approximately five and a half years. One of the reasons submitted for this is that, generally, women are more health-conscious, with men less likely to get a doctor's opinion, leading to undiagnosed and unmanaged health conditions.

READ MORE...

BREAK THE HABIT, NOT YOURSELF: AN ADDICTION RECOVERY GUIDE

Addiction is a complex condition that can take a serious physical, emotional and mental toll on individuals and their communities.

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Mind over sugar:
Coping with stress, anxiety, and diabetes

For the **over 4 million South Africans currently living with diabetes**, there are more than just physical challenges.

Managing the condition involves daily lifestyle changes and modifications that can take an emotional toll too. It is estimated that 77% of individuals living with diabetes globally experience anxiety and depression, and even burnout.

77% of individuals living with diabetes experience:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout

SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES BURNOUT

Individuals living with diabetes may experience the following symptoms:

- Feelings of sadness and emptiness
- Loss of interest in activities they enjoy
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleep patterns
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased anxiety
- Digestive discomfort
- Suicidal thoughts
- Feelings of being overwhelmed

MANAGING DIABETES BURNOUT

These tips can help individuals living with diabetes to manage both their physical and mental health:

Get active: We know physical activity is important for blood sugar management, but activities such as running and yoga are particularly beneficial for mental health.

Cut stress: Try journalling, meditation, reading and deep-breathing exercises.

Eat healthily: Lean protein, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables are good for both mind and body.

Seek support: Ask your doctor to connect you with a mental health professional who will provide you with the necessary support. You can also join a support group or reach out to a family member or confidante.

Mental health is a crucial part of diabetes management. By recognising the emotional challenges, and seeking support, those living with diabetes can lead a healthier and happier life.

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. If you have a mental health related questions, please email **polmedpsych@medscheme.co.za.**

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Men who prioritise their health make strong, smart choices - regular checkups

South African women are outliving their male counterparts by about five-and-a-half years.

One of the reasons submitted for this is that, generally, women are more health-conscious, with men less likely to get a doctor's opinion, leading to undiagnosed and unmanaged health conditions.

With regular screening, particularly for the following conditions, **men can enjoy a healthier and longer life.**

HYPERTENSION

Due to its lack of symptoms, hypertension is often not diagnosed or treated. One study found that, compared to women with hypertension, men with the condition were **15.6%** less likely to be aware of it and **15.3%** less likely to be on treatment. Blood pressure checks can be done at any healthcare practitioner or clinic.

PROSTATE CANCER

One of the most common cancers affecting men in South Africa, **prostate cancer,** affects one in 15 men and accounts for 13% of male cancer-related deaths.

Through regular digital rectal examinations (DRE) and prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood tests, early detection of prostate cancer is possible and allows for effective treatment. PSA tests are covered by the Preventive Care Benefit, which is paid from your Risk
benefit.

Screening from age 55 is recommended, but you may need to start at age 40 if you have risk factors that include a family history of prostate cancer.

POLMED supports proactive health management by covering annual prostate screening for all male members aged 50 to 75 years under the Preventative Care Benefit.

Early detection saves lives. Make your health a priority.

MENTAL HEALTH

According to research, women are 10% more likely to report a mental health condition than men.

One of the consequences of this is that men are four to five times more likely to die by suicide than women. Men can develop effective coping strategies by seeking professional help or having open conversations with a confidante.

POLMED Offers a Mental Healthcare Programme, for more information please contact our Contact Centre for more details. The mental health annual limit is 21 21days in hospital or 15 out-of-hospital sessions.

ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is often more than just a sexual issue. It can also be a symptom of an underlying health condition, such as heart disease, diabetes or prostate problems. So, it's important to mention any symptoms of ED when consulting a doctor to identify the root cause.

ENCOURAGING SOUTH AFRICAN MEN TO TEST AND KNOW THEIR HIV STATUS

Testing for HIV is crucial for the health and wellbeing of our communities. In 2024, approximately 95% of people living with HIV in South Africa knew their status, around 81.5% of these were on antiretroviral treatment, and of those on treatment, around 92% had viral suppression. Early detection through regular testing allows men to access treatment promptly, enhancing their quality of life and significantly reducing the risk of transmission.

Take the first step today - get tested, know your status, and encourage the men in your life to do the same. Together, we can build a healthier future.

With POLMED you are covered as we have a dedicated HIV Programme to ensure you live your best life.

TAKE CHARGE: GET TESTED FOR DIABETES

The number of people with diabetes and pre-diabetes is rapidly increasing in South Africa. Individuals with pre-diabetes have a high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, which is reversible with a change in lifestyle. Regular diabetes testing is essential to protect long-term health. Early detection can prevent serious complications like heart disease, kidney failure, and nerve damage.

Many men live with undiagnosed pre-diabetes or type 2 diabetes because symptoms often go unnoticed. If you have risk factors such as being overweight, having a family history of diabetes, or eating an unhealthy diet, routine screening is especially important.

POLMED members diagnosed with diabetes are encouraged to enrol in the Disease Risk Management Programme. Once enrolled, members will receive a personalised care plan, with specific services covered from the In-Hospital Benefit, helping you manage your condition more effectively and proactively.

Take charge of your health, enrol today and access the care you deserve.

Regular checkups ensure early detection and appropriate treatment as soon as possible. By screening regularly, men will give themselves the best opportunity to live long.

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.

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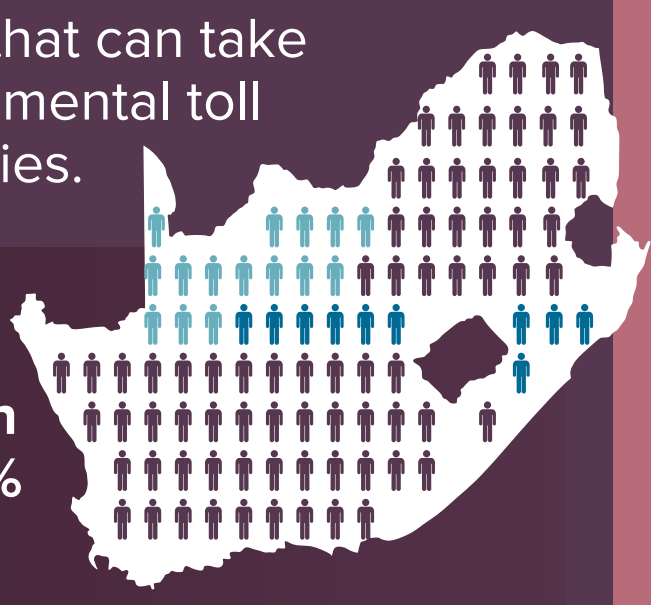
Break the habit, not yourself: an addiction recovery guide

Addiction is a complex condition that can take a serious physical, emotional and mental toll on individuals and their communities.



Around 15% of the South African population is living with drug addiction, and around 10% with alcohol addiction.

UNDERSTANDING THE CYCLE

The cycle of addiction typically follows the following pattern:

- **Initial use**: trying the substance for the first time
- **Misuse**: using the substance repeatedly for “positive” effects
- **Tolerance/dependence**: the body becomes dependent on the substance
- **Addiction**: the individual feels unable to function without the substance

Without proper intervention, the cycle of addiction continues, with devastating effects on the individual and those around them.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

The good news is that the cycle can be broken.

Identifying triggers is a critical component of addiction recovery. Triggers may include stress, grief, peer pressure or social settings. Once these have been identified, individuals can work to make the necessary lifestyle changes, including avoiding triggering social settings or individuals and adopting behaviours that can help manage emotional triggers, such as therapy and exercise.

While addiction can feel like a lonely experience, breaking the cycle needn’t be a solitary journey. Individuals will navigate their recovery more effectively with the support of family and friends, alongside therapists, doctors, and support groups, which will help them develop coping mechanisms to manage the symptoms associated with the journey.

POLMED covers addiction treatment. For detailed information and to initiate the process, please get in touch with our Pre-authorisation Department at 0860 765 633.

Our team will be happy to guide you through the necessary steps. It is always important to use hospitals on the network to avoid co-payments.

To initiate the hospital authorisation process for addiction treatment, the following information is required:

- Hospital practice number
- Treating doctor’s practice number
- ICD-10 diagnosis code
- Planned date of admission
- Once the member has been admitted, the attending psychiatrist must submit a DSM-4 form to finalise the admission process.

Recovery takes time and requires both commitment and patience. But with determination, support and the right resources, it’s possible to live a healthy and addiction-free life.

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