



POLMED

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE



YOUR CARE POLMED

May 2026

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of care.”

Benjamin Franklin

Dear POLMED Member,

As we move into the colder months, May reminds us that many of the most important health decisions are the everyday ones. This month, we focus on the impact small preventative actions can have on long-term wellbeing, whether that means understanding health risks during pregnancy, protecting yourself against seasonal illness, or making choices that support healthier lungs and a healthier future.

We unpack gestational diabetes, a condition that can develop during pregnancy and affect both mother and baby if left unmanaged. With the right monitoring, support and care, however, it can often be successfully controlled.

We also observe World No Tobacco Day on 31 May, highlighting the harmful effects of tobacco use and the benefits of quitting, no matter how long you’ve smoked.

And as flu season begins, we look at why the flu vaccine remains one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect yourself and those around you from serious illness.

Because prevention is not just about avoiding illness. It’s about protecting the life you want to keep living.

Yours in health,
The YourCare Team

In this issue...

WHAT TO EXPECT WITH GESTATIONAL DIABETES

Pregnancy triggers many changes in the body, some of which may affect your body’s ability to process glucose effectively. This could result in pregnancy-related or gestational diabetes.

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FLU VACCINE: A JAB AWAY FROM BETTER HEALTH

An annual flu vaccination is one of the simplest and most effective ways of protecting yourself and those around you.

[▶ READ MORE...](#)

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY: SAY NO TO VAPING

World No Tobacco Day, commemorated on 31 May, encourages you to discover the truth about vaping. It will help you make an informed choice not to vape and ultimately protect your health.

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What to expect with Gestational Diabetes

Pregnancy triggers many changes in the body, some of which may affect your body's ability to process glucose effectively. This could result in pregnancy-related or gestational diabetes.



Around **9% to 25%** of women in South Africa

are affected by gestational diabetes. This condition could have serious implications for both mother and baby, so it's important to diagnose and manage gestational diabetes early.

RISK FACTORS

The risk for gestational diabetes increases in pregnant women who are:

Older than 35 years

Living with prediabetes

Overweight or obese

Related to people with diabetes



COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH GESTATIONAL DIABETES

If left undiagnosed or unmanaged, gestational diabetes can lead to the following complications:
For the mother:

- A larger-than-average baby, resulting in prolonged labour, birth trauma, early medical induction of labour or a caesarean section deliver.
- Excessive weight gain
- Infections, especially of the urinary tract and vagina
- High blood pressure during pregnancy
- A 50% increased risk of developing diabetes later in life

For the baby:

- A larger-than-average baby, resulting in difficulties during labour
- Low blood sugar and breathing problems shortly after birth
- An increased risk of developing diabetes and obesity in childhood and later in life.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GESTATIONAL DIABETES

In many cases, gestational diabetes presents no obvious symptoms at all. However, if symptoms do appear, they may include:



Increased excessive thirst and urination



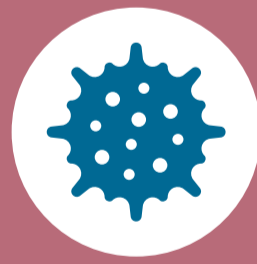
Fatigue



Blurred vision



Nausea



Recurring infections, such as vaginal yeast infections and boils

As these symptoms can be dismissed as normal pregnancy symptoms, routine screening during pregnancy is essential.

PREGNANCY SCREENING AND MANAGEMENT

Gestational diabetes isn't a reflection of anything a parent has done wrong. It's a medical condition caused largely by changes during pregnancy and can happen to anyone.

Management of the condition includes regular antenatal check-ups, monitoring blood sugar levels, following a balanced diet, and staying physically active when medically recommended.



Early detection and appropriate care will help to ensure a healthier pregnancy and healthier outcomes for both mother and baby.

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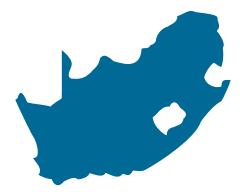
Flu Vaccine: A jab away from better health

An annual flu vaccination is one of the simplest and most effective ways of protecting yourself and those around you.



The flu is responsible for around

4% OF ADULT DEATHS IN SOUTH AFRICA.



Therefore, it is a serious illness that can place a strain on families, workplaces and your broader community.



HOW THE FLU VACCINE WORKS

The flu vaccine will trigger the development of antibodies, boosting the immune system to help the body fight the virus. As the virus is constantly evolving, you're advised to vaccinate annually so your immune system can effectively fight the current strain.



While the vaccine doesn't guarantee that you won't get the flu, it will **reduce your risk** and the **severity of the illness**.

HEALTH COMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FLU

Flu won't just keep you in bed for days; it also increases the risk for complications such as:



Asthma attacks in those living with asthma

Inflammation of the heart (myocarditis)

Multi-organ failure

Pneumonia

Sinus and ear infections

Death

WHO IS MOST AT RISK FOR FLU COMPLICATIONS?

We should all get the flu vaccine, but certain individuals are more at risk for severe complications if they contract the virus.

These include:

- Adults over the age of 65
- Children under the age of five
- Obese individuals
- Pregnant women
- Those with chronic conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes and kidney disease
- Those with respiratory conditions, such as asthma and TB
- Those with weakened immune systems



BUSTING THE MYTHS

Despite the benefits of the flu vaccine, there are still many misconceptions about it and a certain distrust, especially in light of concerns about COVID-19 vaccines.

MYTH: The flu vaccine can give you the flu.

FACT: No, it can't give you the flu, as it doesn't contain the virus capable of causing illness.

MYTH: Healthy people don't need the vaccine.

FACT: Yes, even healthy people need it, as the flu doesn't discriminate.

MYTH: Vaccines aren't safe.

FACT: Yes, vaccines are safe. They are routinely tested, developed and carefully monitored.



As a POLMED member, you and all of your dependants get one free flu vaccination annually. You can find out more on our website: www.polmed.co.za

**Do your part by getting the annual flu vaccine.
You can help make the flu season healthier for everyone.**

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- <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/vaccines/keyfacts.html>
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World No Tobacco Day: Say No to Vaping

The use of e-cigarettes (vapes) has become increasingly common in South Africa, especially among the youth.



AROUND 18% OF HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS ARE CURRENTLY VAPING.



MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT VAPING

MISCONCEPTION 1:

Vaping is frequently marketed as a safer option to traditional smoking, as vapes may contain fewer toxic substances than traditional cigarettes.

MISCONCEPTION 2:

Vaping is also mistakenly viewed as a tool to help smokers quit.

REALITY:

The reality is that vaping poses serious health risks to you and is an evolving public health challenge.

HEALTH RISKS OF VAPING

Respiratory damage

Vaping has been linked to:



Throat irritation



Chronic coughing and wheezing



Lung scarring



E-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury (EVALI)

Heart disease

According to 2025 data, heart disease accounts for **6.8%** of total adult deaths in South Africa.

Vaping may be contributing to this figure, as those who use e-cigarettes are more likely to develop heart failure than those who've never used them.



Nicotine dependence

One study found that nearly **47%** of high school vapers admitted to vaping within the first hour of waking.

This indicates nicotine dependence, which not only has an impact on attention, memory and emotional regulation, but could also potentially lead to long-term addiction.

QUITTING VAPING AND TRADITIONAL TOBACCO

Vaping isn't and shouldn't be considered a harmless method for quitting smoking.

Here are some tips for quitting both smoking and vaping:



Get support from a professional counsellor or a support group.



Identify triggers, such as social settings and stress, so you can find ways to manage or avoid them.



Manage stress through activities such as meditation or journaling. References

GO VAPE FREE

World No Tobacco Day, commemorated on 31 May, encourages you to discover the truth about vaping. It will help you make an informed choice not to vape and ultimately protect your health.

POLMED members can enrol in the GoSmokeFree Programme to help them quit smoking. Book a pre-quit assessment with our GoSmokeFree advisor at a GoSmokeFree accredited pharmacy and begin to feel the benefits immediately. Visit their website at www.gosmokefree.co.za for more information.

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