



POLMED

OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

YOUR CARE POLMED

July 2026

“Kindness is like
snow – it beautifies
everything it
covers.”

Kahlil Gibran

Dear **POLMED** Member,

Winter is in full swing, and the shorter days and colder temperatures can make staying healthy more challenging. Braving the cold to exercise can feel like an impossible task — and so can staying clear of junk food when all you're craving is comfort food. Sticking to your health routine is more than just a necessity over winter; it's a kindness that you owe yourself.

With some simple tweaks to your routine, you can stay warm while staying healthy. Instead of hitting the road for that early morning run, try an at-home exercise routine. And, to avoid reaching for that comfort food, try some wholesome, tasty and healthy substitutes.

Remember that winter brings the increased risk of colds and flu, so supporting your immune system is a priority. We unpack the benefits of eating healthy and keeping active in our monthly infographic, **Your Winter Wellness Guide**. In keeping with the winter health theme, we explore how people with diabetes can stay healthy and why mental health matters.

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

Warm winter regards,
Your Care Team

In this issue...

YOUR WINTER WELLNESS GUIDE

As the temperature drops, you may just be thinking about keeping warm, but good lifestyle practices, such as exercise and balanced nutrition, are key to staying healthy during the season.

> [READ MORE...](#)

MANAGING DIABETES IN WINTER

For the 7% of South African adults living with diabetes, winter brings unique challenges and risks that require extra care and awareness.

> [READ MORE...](#)

MIND OVER STIGMA: WHY YOU NEED TO SEEK HELP?

With one in five South Africans expected to experience poor mental health at some point in their lives, education and awareness around conditions such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, and bipolar mood disorders is key.

> [READ MORE...](#)



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Your Winter Wellness Guide

Winter often changes how we live and eat.

**We're less active, stay indoors,
and eat more comfort food.**



But this can affect the management of chronic conditions,

so we need to ensure that we maintain **good wellness habits** despite the cold.

Losing weight has many health benefits, but it's not always easy. That's why we've introduced a Weight Management Programme for members with a high BMI and waist circumference.

This 12-week, biokineticist-led programme includes support from a dietician and behavioural psychologist, with ongoing guidance after completion. Take the first step toward better health today.

Email: polmedwmp@medscheme.co.za | Call: 0860 765 633

SUPPORT YOUR IMMUNITY

Because of the increased risk for colds and flu at this time of year, you need to support your immunity with foods rich in vitamins A, C and D, and minerals such as zinc. Sources include citrus fruits, carrots, butternut and leafy greens.

Here are some healthy meal ideas to support your immunity:

- Vegetable soup with butternut, carrots and lentils
- Bean and spinach stew
- Fruit bowl with citrus and unsweetened yoghurt

MANAGE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR AND BLOOD PRESSURE

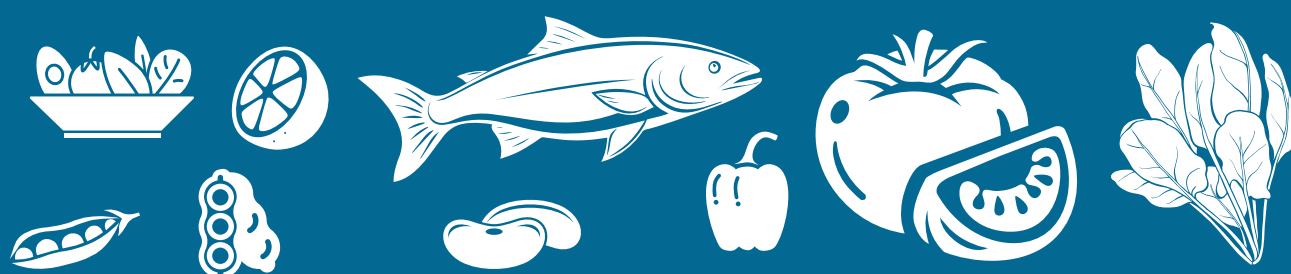
Comfort foods are typically high in sugar, salt, saturated fat and refined carbohydrates, which can spike blood sugar and blood pressure levels.

This is a concern, as:

- Over **two million** South African adults are living with **type 2 diabetes**.
- **High blood pressure** contributes to **heart disease**, which is a leading cause of death.

Tips for healthy eating:

- Choose high-fibre carbohydrates such as whole grains, some legumes and vegetables.
- Reduce your intake of salt, saturated fats and processed foods.
- Rather enjoy bean soup, quinoa, lentils, brown rice, salmon and spinach. Or try the high-fibre ratatouille recipe below.



High-fibre ratatouille recipe:

Ingredients

- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- Onion
- Garlic
- Baby marrow
- Mushrooms
- Red pepper
- Brinjal
- Thyme



Method

- Spray your saucepan liberally with non-stick cooking spray and sauté the onion and garlic on a medium heat until soft.
- Add the chopped tomatoes and a few sprigs of thyme, and cook for five minutes.
- Add the peppers and brinjal, and cook for four minutes.
- Then add mushrooms and baby marrow, and cook until the veggies are done but not soft, or you'll lose all the flavour.
- Season lightly with salt and freshly ground pepper, and serve with a drizzle of olive or truffle oil.
- If you make this dish in bulk, you can blitz it until it's smooth and freeze it for a quick and delicious weekday soup.

Elske Rich (registered dietician and spokesperson for ADSA)

STAY HYDRATED

It can be easy to forget to drink water in winter, but hydration is essential.

The recommendation is **250 ml of water for each 10 kg of your weight**.

Rooibos tea, soups and stews can add to your fluid intake.



BE ACTIVE

Exercise during winter will support you in managing your chronic conditions by helping you maintain your weight, blood sugar levels and heart health.

If it's difficult to get outdoors, try:



Walking around
the house



Online workouts or
exercises at home



Household
chores

As the temperature drops, you may just be thinking about keeping warm, but good lifestyle practices, such as exercise and balanced nutrition, are key to maintaining good health.

REFERENCES:

- <https://idf.org/our-network/regions-and-members/africa/members/south-africa/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/articles/managing-diabetes-cold-weather.html>

Published: July 2026

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Managing diabetes in winter

For the **7% of South African adults living with diabetes**, winter brings unique challenges and risks that require extra care and awareness.¹



Some individuals living with diabetes may also test their blood sugar less frequently, and even avoid or delay medical check-ups, because of the cold.



HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR MANAGING DIABETES IN WINTER:



STAY ACTIVE

You don't need to leave your home to keep moving. Doing household chores or following online workouts can help keep you fit and maintain healthy blood sugar levels.



EAT HEALTHY COMFORT FOODS

Comfort foods don't have to be rich in salt, fats, sugar and processed carbohydrates. Whole grains, legumes, and vegetables can make comfort meals such as soups and stews that help keep your blood sugar stable.



MONITOR YOUR BLOOD SUGAR

Always stick to your routine. Continue to monitor your blood sugar and go for medical check-ups.



KEEP HYDRATED

Don't forget to drink water or opt for unsweetened tea, such as green tea or Rooibos.



PROTECT YOUR FEET AND SKIN

Keep your skin and feet warm and moisturised. Remember to always dry between your toes.



USE YOUR SICK DAYS

If you happen to fall ill, stay home, but continue to:

- Take your medication
- Check your blood sugar levels
- Keep hydrated

If you begin to have difficulty breathing or your blood sugar is spiking, seek medical help immediately.

Winter can be challenging, but by adapting daily habits, those living with diabetes can avoid complications and maintain good health throughout the year.

Did you know that POLMED offers a comprehensive Disease Risk Management Programme designed to support members living with chronic conditions? One of the key conditions managed through this programme is diabetes, which requires ongoing care and monitoring to ensure optimal health outcomes.

If you would like more information or wish to register for the programme, please contact us via:

Email: polmeddiseaseman@medscheme.co.za | **Call Centre:** 0860 765 633

Early intervention and consistent management can make a significant difference—take the first step toward better health today.

REFERENCE

1. <https://idf.org/our-network/regions-and-members/africa/members/south-africa/>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/articles/managing-diabetes-cold-weather.html>

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Mind Over Stigma: Why you need to seek help?

With nearly one in three South African adults living with impaired mental health, this campaign highlights the importance of treating mental health and wellness as a universal human right¹.



STEPS TO TAKE TO HELP YOU COPE.

RAISING AWARENESS

One in five South Africans expected to experience poor mental health at some point in their lives, education and awareness around conditions such as anxiety, depression, PTSD, and bipolar mood disorders are key. It's also crucial to highlight the importance of early intervention, self-care therapies, and seeking help.

REDUCING STIGMA

Despite growing conversations around mental health, stigma still prevents many individuals from speaking up or seeking treatment. Research suggests that while 70% of women and 65% of men report a need for mental health support, men are four times more likely to die by suicide than women.

PROMOTING ACTION

Mental health conditions affect one in four South Africans, yet access to care and funding remains limited. By raising awareness, starting conversations, and fostering understanding in our workplaces, schools, and communities, we can help build a society that values mental wellbeing as deeply as physical health.

Poor mental health can affect anyone, irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or ethnicity. With so many countries participating in World Mental Health Day, a shared commitment to improving mental wellbeing reinforces international solidarity and reminds us that we're not alone.

TAKE
**ACTION
NOW**

If you've been diagnosed with depression, bipolar disorder, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), you can register on POLMED's Disease Management Programme. We're here to support you with:

- A personalised care plan will be issued for out-of-hospital treatment.
- Telephonic support by a mental health case manager.
- Paid from risk, so your out-of-hospital benefits will not be affected.

To register:

Email: polmeddiseasemanagement@medscheme.co.za | Call: **0860 765 633**

Take the first step toward better mental health support today!

REFERENCES:

1. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/public-health/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2022.986531/full>
2. https://www.nationalplanningcommission.org.za/assets/Documents/Mental%20Health%20Situational%20Analysis%20South%20Africa%20final%20Report_May%202024.pdf