



Issue 1 Newsletter

JANUARY TO MARCH 2025

Dear Member

PG Group Medical Scheme wishes you and your family good health and happiness in 2025.

In this edition of the newsletter, we provide you with health and wellness insights on cardiovascular conditions and strokes, offer recommendations on how to benefit from enhancing your medication regimen as part of your New Year's resolutions, and provide guidance on how to support your child in taking care of their dental health.

We welcome any suggestions that you may have on articles or member benefits you would like to see published in future newsletters. Please send your suggestions by email to info@pggmeds.co.za.

Until next time, enjoy the read!

Mike Neubert
Scheme Manager



South African statistics: A growing concern in cardiovascular disease

According to The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa, cardiovascular (heart-related) conditions and strokes are the leading cause of disabilities and deaths in South Africa and worldwide.

Did you know that in South Africa more people die of cardiovascular disease than all cancers combined? Cardiovascular disease was once thought to be associated with the elderly only, however more than half of related deaths now occur amongst South Africans younger than 65 years. Cardiovascular disease is responsible for one in every six deaths in South Africa.

Premature deaths caused by cardiovascular disease in working-aged people (i.e. age 35 to 64) are expected to increase by 41% by the year 2030. The good news is that up to 80% of these deaths are preventable through a healthy lifestyle which means a healthy diet, regular exercise and not smoking.

Hypertension (high blood pressure):

One in every three South Africans suffer from hypertension, and many of them are unaware that they have this condition. Hypertension is the leading risk factor for cardiovascular disease and is responsible for 50% of strokes and 42% of heart attacks. In South Africa, almost eight out of 10 people above the age of 50 have high blood pressure.

Hyperlipidaemia (hypercholesterolaemia/high cholesterol):

One in every four adults in South Africa have high cholesterol and unfortunately very few people are aware they are at risk.



Diabetes:

In South Africa, almost one in every 10 adults are diagnosed with diabetes, of which one in five adults have impaired blood glucose control. Unfortunately, most people may not even know that they have diabetes. According to Diabetes South Africa, four million South Africans are living with diabetes. The good news is that you may prevent type 2 diabetes by following a healthy diet, exercising regularly and managing your weight.

Obesity:

About two in three women, and one in three men are overweight or obese in South Africa. 40.1% of women are obese compared to 11.6% of men. A measure for abdominal obesity is defined as a waist circumference of 102cm or greater in males, and 88cm or greater in females. About 10% of males and 50% of females have abdominal obesity.

Understanding the link between cardiovascular disease when you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar

Metabolic Syndrome

Metabolic syndrome refers to certain health conditions that, when they occur together, increase your risk of cardiovascular disease, strokes and developing type 2 diabetes mellitus.



When you have a combination of at least three of the following risk factors, this increases your risk of developing metabolic syndrome, and cardiac (heart-related) complications:

- High blood pressure (hypertension) forces the heart to work harder which increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, which in turn may lead to a heart attack and/or stroke.
- High blood sugar levels and/or insulin resistance damages your blood vessels and nerves, increasing your risk of cardiovascular disease.
- High cholesterol and triglyceride levels (fatty substances in the blood) increases the risk of heart attack and/or stroke.
- Low HDL cholesterol (often referred to as 'good' cholesterol as it removes other forms of cholesterol from the bloodstream) is linked to a risk of heart disease.

Prevalence in South Africa

In South Africa, about 30% of adults have metabolic syndrome, with higher rates in urban areas due to poor nutrition and inactivity. One in four South African women is at risk, especially after menopause. Metabolic syndrome increases the risk of type 2 diabetes by five times and is linked to unhealthy lifestyle choices. Men with abdominal obesity are at greater risk.

How to reduce your risk

While genetic factors play a role in the development of metabolic syndrome, lifestyle changes may significantly reduce your risk. Here are some steps you may take:

- Make use of the Scheme's health assessment wellness benefit to check your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Your treating doctor may also monitor these results with every consultation.
- If you are registered for one or more chronic conditions, ensure that you go for all your follow-up consultations and tests.
- Always take your chronic medication as prescribed by your treating doctor.
- Follow a balanced diet, reduce your salt, sugar and alcohol intake.
- Get regular exercise to keep your heart and blood vessels healthy.
- Quit smoking as it is a major risk factor for heart disease. Seek support to help you quit.
- Maintain a healthy weight and work on decreasing your waist circumference if you carry excess belly fat.

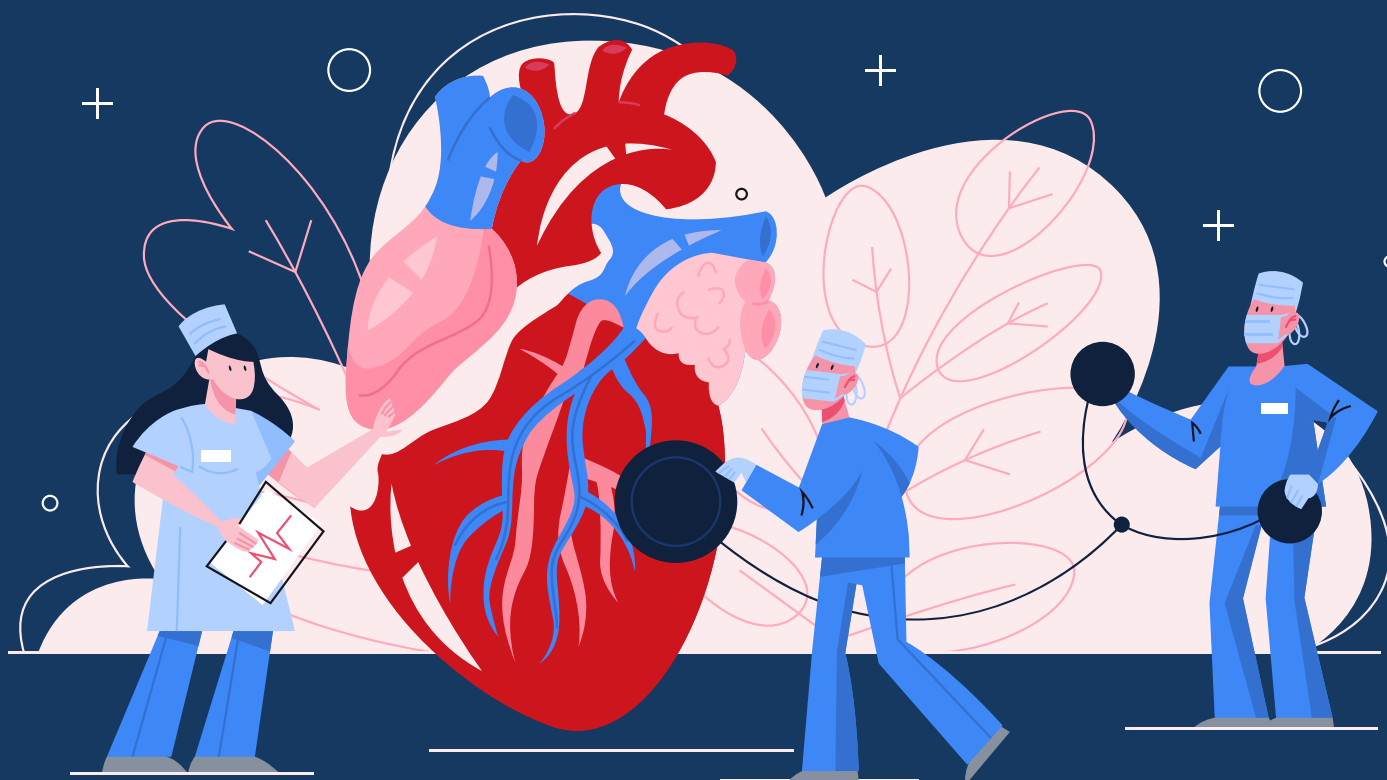
Metabolic syndrome is a serious health risk, but the good news is that it is preventable. By making healthier lifestyle choices, you may lower your chances of developing this condition and protect your overall wellbeing.

Sources:

Department of Statistics South Africa (Stats SA)

Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa

PubMed National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH)



Resolutions: Six ways to improve your medication regimen this year

The onset of a new year presents a unique opportunity to evaluate your medication regimen and to make informed choices towards achieving better health.

1. Resolve to ... ask more questions

Many individuals may hesitate to ask about their chronic medication or treatment. However, the Scheme's clinical team has the expertise to guide you on how to improve your health. Discuss your concerns with the managed care team on **0860 005 037** (option 5).

2. Resolve to ... never miss a dose

To see improvement in both chronic and short-term conditions, follow your medication plan by taking the right dose at the right time correctly. Set reminders on your phone or take your medication with meals to avoid missed doses. Consider home delivery options from pharmacies like Clicks, Dis-Chem or Medipost for consistent access to your medication.

3. Resolve to ... take your medications safely

Taking your medication incorrectly or without understanding its effects may be harmful. Always read and follow the instructions on your prescription label. For instance, some medication needs to be taken with food and mixing them with alcohol or certain activities may be dangerous. Ensure that your medication is being paid from the correct benefit. For example, chronic medication is paid from the chronic medication benefit instead of from your medical savings account (MSA).

4. Resolve to ... organise your medication

Many people are more likely to stick to their medication routines when their medication drawer or cabinet is organised. Take time to check and throw away expired or unused medication. If you are taking generic medication and want to check the original medication name or *vice versa*, you may visit our [website](#) or click [here](#) to view the formulary. Please click [here](#) for an easy guide on how to use the chronic medication formulary.

5. Resolve to ... check in with your doctor

A good way to start the new year is by going to your doctor. This visit is a chance to have wellness tests like checking your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Based on the results, medication doses may need to be adjusted. Review all your medications with your doctor and tell them what works or needs to change. Getting all your medications from one pharmacy helps keep accurate records, improving safety from drug interactions. Make sure your doctor knows which pharmacy you use.



6. Resolve to ... update your contact information

The start of a new year is a good time to ensure the Scheme has your current contact and banking details on record. This helps with communication and ensures that accurate information is displayed on the Scheme's mobile app for co-payment settlements and avoiding delays for refunds or credits.

We trust that these resolutions will inspire you to set personal goals aimed at fostering healthier habits concerning your medication management in the upcoming year.

Source:
Express Scripts Pharmacy



Helping your children take care of their teeth

denis



Taking care of your children's teeth is important for their overall health, confidence and development. Poor oral hygiene may cause tooth decay, gum disease and infections, affecting eating, speaking and learning.

Good oral healthcare is crucial for children since baby teeth guide the growth of permanent teeth and prevent future orthodontic issues.



Encourage good oral hygiene habits

With the right habits and routines, parents may help their children maintain healthy teeth and gums, setting them up for a lifetime of good oral healthcare.

Start early

After feeding, wipe your baby's gums with a clean, damp washcloth. Once the first tooth appears, start brushing with a soft-bristled toothbrush and a tiny smear of fluoride toothpaste.

Lead by example

Children often mimic their parents' actions, so let them see you brushing and flossing your teeth regularly. This shows the importance of oral hygiene, and you may also make it a fun shared family activity.

Set a routine

Establishing a routine helps make oral care a natural part of their day. Encourage your child to brush their teeth twice a day – once in the morning and once before bed, and to floss at least twice a week.

Teach them how to do it

Supervise younger children while they brush and floss. Provide simple instructions often, focussing on brushing rather than technique. Increase their independence gradually.

Make it fun

- Turn brushing into a game by setting a timer, celebrating small wins, and adding a reward system.
- Play one of your child's favourite songs or find a song specifically about brushing teeth.
- Read a short story or tell a fun tale while they brush to help pass the time.

Smart snacking for oral health

- Limit sweets, sugary foods, and sugar-filled drinks, and make water their main drink.
- Offer alternatives like cheese, nuts, or fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Keep healthy snacks readily available at home to reduce impulsive choices.
- Encourage them to rinse their mouth with water after every meal or snack.
- After brushing teeth at night, do not let them eat or drink anything other than water before bedtime.

Visit the dentist regularly

Regular dental check-ups are essential for maintaining good oral health. Schedule your child's first dental visit by their first birthday and continue with visits twice a year. A dentist may identify and address potential issues early and provide preventative treatments.










Source:

Dental Information Systems (DENIS)



Important contact details



Customer care	Telephone WhatsApp Email	0860 005 037 0860 005 037 info@pggmeds.co.za	Press 1 for benefits confirmation and claims enquiries 2 for hospital admissions, pre-authorisations, maternity and oncology 3 for dental benefits and authorisation 4 for HIV-related queries 5 for chronic medication
	Members can dial 0860 005 037 for any Scheme queries (Monday to Friday, 08:00 to 16:30)		
Physical address	Parc du Cap Building 6, 7 Mispel Road, Bellville 7530		
Postal address	PG Group Medical Scheme, PO Box 2070, Bellville 7535		
Scheme website	www.pggmeds.co.za		
Membership queries	Email	membership@pggmeds.co.za	
Claims submission	Email	claims@pggmeds.co.za	
Chronic medication registration and queries	<i>Medicine Risk Management (MRM) Programme</i>		
	Email	chronic@pggmeds.co.za	
YourLife Programme	<i>HIV management programme</i>		
	Email	yourlife@pggmeds.co.za	
Netcare 911	<i>Emergency assistance and ambulance service</i>		
	Emergencies/Health-on-Line	082 911	
	Telephone	0860 638 2273	
	Email	customerservice@netcare.co.za	
	Website	www.netcare911.co.za	
Preferred Provider Negotiators (PPN)	<i>Optical benefits</i>		
	Telephone	041 065 0650	
	Fax	041 586 4184	
	Email	info@ppn.co.za / claims@ppn.co.za	
	Website	www.ppn.co.za	
Dental Information Systems (DENIS)	<i>Dental benefits</i>		
	Telephone	0860 104 939	
	Email	pgenq@denis.co.za / claims@denis.co.za	
	Website	www.denis.co.za	
Medipost Pharmacy	<i>Courier pharmacy for chronic medication</i>		
	PO Box 40101, Arcadia 0007		
	Telephone	012 426 4000	
	Email	info@medipost.co.za	
	Website	www.medipost.co.za	
Momentum Multiply	<i>Wellness rewards programme</i>		
	Telephone	0861 886 600	
	Email	multiply@momentum.co.za	
	Website	www.multiply.co.za	
Hello Doctor	<i>Medical advice</i>		
	Dial *120*1019# to request a call back from a doctor, or download the Hello Doctor mobile app		
	 		
Fraud Hotline	Telephone	0800 000 436	
	Email	PGGmeds@tip-offs.com	