

# YOUR CARE POLMED

October 2020



**POLMED**  
OUR INVESTMENT OUR HEALTH OUR FUTURE

## Exercise has benefits beyond weight loss



We all know that exercise is good for us. However, did you know that exercise has benefits beyond keeping fit and weight loss? In fact, regular exercise is an effective way to help manage chronic conditions and improve mental wellbeing.



### Exercising with a chronic condition

You may think that a chronic condition can only be managed through diet and medication, but research shows that exercise also plays an important role in managing a chronic condition.

While exercise plays an important role when it comes to managing your health, always speak to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine if you have an existing medical condition. A registered biokineticist can also guide you about the best forms of exercise. It's important to find the appropriate exercise plan based on your needs.



### Diabetes

Around 4.5 million South Africans have diabetes. If not properly managed, the condition can increase the risk of heart disease, kidney damage, nerve damage and even amputations. Thankfully, diabetics can reduce their risk through healthy lifestyle habits, including exercise.

Exercise can help improve blood sugar levels, manage weight and improve heart health. This is important as adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to die from heart disease than those not living with diabetes.

Diabetics should aim for at least 150 minutes of physical activity every week, including strength training 2 to 3 times a week (such as jumping jacks, lunges or push-ups).



### Hypertension

Around 27.4% of men and 26.1% of women in South Africa have hypertension. If poorly managed, the condition can increase the risk of heart disease, heart failure, aneurysm and dementia. However, exercise can reduce the risk of these complications as it helps to control blood pressure, reduce stress levels, manage weight and strengthen the heart.

Individuals with hypertension should aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise per day and include strength training twice a week.

Note: Those living with hypertension should be careful not to inhale deeply and hold their breath during the actual lifting of a weight, as this can raise their blood pressure and also lead to dizziness.



### Pain management

Almost 1 in 5 South Africans battle chronic pain. Worldwide, pain in the lower back causes more absenteeism from work than cancer.

Chronic pain can increase the risk of depression, anxiety, hypertension and poor sleep. Exercise, however, can aid in managing pain as it helps to improve mobility, reduce the severity of the pain as well as improve quality of life.

It's important for people with chronic pain to engage in light exercise that doesn't place much strain on the back. A registered biokineticist will be able to guide them on exercises that will help with, rather than worsen, the pain.



### Injury prevention

Exercising can also help to reduce the risk of injury, as it improves muscle tone and bone strength.



### Mental health

Around 70% of South Africans who attempted suicide had a mental health condition, according to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG). For those battling mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, exercising can help.

Regular exercise releases brain chemicals known as endorphins and these endorphins help to reduce stress levels and improve your mood.

Exercise isn't just about weight loss. If you want to improve your quality of life and stay healthy, it's important to remain as physically active as you can.



## References

- <https://www.idf.org/e-library/epidemiology-research/diabetes-atlas/159-idf-diabetes-atlas-ninth-edition-2019.html>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/type-2-diabetes/complications-uncontrolled-diabetes#complications>
- <https://www.endocrineweb.com/conditions/type-2-diabetes/type-2-diabetes-exercise>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/diabetes/why-diabetes-matters/cardiovascular-disease--diabetes>
- <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-6642-3#>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/symptoms-causes/syc-20373410>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/getting-active-to-control-high-blood-pressure#>
- <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-high-blood-pressure.html>
- [https://painsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Almost\\_1\\_in\\_5\\_South\\_African\\_adults\\_have\\_chronic.19.pdf](https://painsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Almost_1_in_5_South_African_adults_have_chronic.19.pdf)
- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)32187-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)32187-1/fulltext)
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5461882/>
- <https://www.pathways.health/chronic-pain-long-term-effects-on-the-brain-and-body-explained/>
- [http://www.sadag.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=3091&Itemid=483](http://www.sadag.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3091&Itemid=483)
- [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(18\)30227-X/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(18)30227-X/fulltext)
- <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/exercising-to-relax>
- <https://www.painscience.com/articles/strength-training.php>
- <https://www.immediateclinic.com/blog/how-can-staying-shape-prevent-injuries>
- <https://www.nerdfitness.com/blog/strength-training-101-where-do-i-start/>
- <https://www.acsm.org/blog-detail/acsm-certified-blog/2019/02/27/exercise-hypertension-prevention-treatment>

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](mailto:polmeddiseaseman@medscheme.co.za) with your membership number and contact details.