

YOUR CARE POLMED

October 2020



How healthy are you?



When it comes to your health, prevention of illness is crucial. One of the best forms of prevention is to go for your annual wellness screening.

These screening tests (otherwise known as a health risk assessment) are especially important because many South Africans don't know they have chronic conditions like diabetes, high cholesterol or hypertension.



WHAT IS A HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT (HRA)?

The HRA helps with early identification of chronic conditions and consists of the following:



Body mass index (BMI) assessment

Approximately 70% of South African women and 31% of South African men are overweight or obese. Obesity can increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes and hypertension. The risk of obesity can be lessened by knowing and managing your BMI.

A BMI reading refers to the measurement of your weight in relation to your height. A healthy BMI range is 18.5 to 24.9, whereas a reading of 25 to 29.9 indicates that the person is overweight. A reading higher than 30 means the person is considered to be obese.



Waist circumference

Waist circumference focuses on the fat around your stomach. Too much fat around the stomach can increase the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Even if your BMI reading indicates you are healthy, a high waist circumference can still be dangerous to your health.

Regardless of your height or BMI, you should try to lose weight if your waist is:

- 102cm or more for men
- 88cm or more for women



Finger-prick glucose test

In South Africa, around 4.5 million people have been diagnosed with diabetes, yet approximately 1.4 million South Africans remain undiagnosed.

Undiagnosed diabetes can increase the risk of heart disease, heart attack, stroke and nerve damage. Being aware of your diabetes risk can help you manage the associated risks and thereby help prevent the condition.

You can learn about your risk for diabetes by testing your glucose levels. A healthcare provider will use a device to prick your finger and a blood glucose monitor to analyse the blood drops in order to provide a blood glucose reading.

Your fasting blood sugar level should be below 5.5 mmol/L. A reading of 5.5 to 6.9 mmol/L can indicate prediabetes, and anything higher than 7.0 mmol/L can mean that you have diabetes.



Finger-prick cholesterol test

High cholesterol levels can increase the risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke. A finger-prick cholesterol test measures your total cholesterol levels, which includes both low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. A healthy total cholesterol level reading should be lower than 5 mmol/L – anything higher indicates a risk for heart disease.



Blood pressure screening

Hypertension refers to high blood pressure. This condition forces the heart to work harder which can increase the risk of stroke and heart failure. Therefore, it's important to monitor your blood pressure.

While approximately 27.4% of men and 26.1% of women in South Africa have hypertension, around 50% of the population are unaware they are living with hypertension.

A blood pressure screening measures the pressure inside the arteries at which the heart pumps blood through the body. A healthy blood pressure reading should be between 120/80 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg.

Polmed Scheme has screening benefits that are paid from the Insured benefits and not from your Overall Out-of-hospital benefits at Scheme Rate once a year. Consult your member guide to view your Preventative Care Benefits.

The best way to manage your health is by being proactive. One way is by completing an annual wellness screening which informs you about your health status. Remember, prevention is always better than cure.



Note: Patients with pre-existing conditions may have different target ranges for blood sugar levels, total cholesterol, and blood pressure based on clinical guidelines.



References

- <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/body-mass-index-bmi-and-waist-circumference>
- <https://businesstech.co.za/news/lifestyle/331389/heres-how-many-south-africans-are-overweight-according-to-discovery/https://www.thedailyvox.co.za/sas-obesity-rates-are-among-the-highest-in-africa-heres-why/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/lifestyle/why-is-my-waist-size-important/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6089280/>
- <https://www.idf.org/e-library/epidemiology-research/diabetes-atlas/159-idf-diabetes-atlas-ninth-edition-2019.html>
- <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?type=printable&id=10.1371/journal.pone.0211208>
- https://www.summitmedicalgroup.com/library/adult_health/tst_serum_glucose_test/
- <http://www.heartfoundation.co.za/cholesterol/>
- <https://medlineplus.gov/cholesterollevelswhatyouneedtoknow.html>
- <https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-6642-3>
- <http://www.heartfoundation.co.za/blood-pressure/>