



Healthcare News

Quarter 2 – 2008

Dear Members

You may recall that last year I wrote about high blood pressure and high cholesterol and how to manage these conditions. The third topic in the series is diabetes. Together these three make up the condition now known as Metabolic Syndrome.

An increasing number of South Africans have all three conditions and often, with early detection and a change of

lifestyle, these conditions can be reversed or easily managed. However, before we get down to the detail, I need to address a few admin-related issues.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and look forward to your feedback.

Jenny

62% of Plus Network Option members lose out

There is a very worrying trend in the Plus Option – members who have chosen a Network GP have not used their chosen GP nor the correct process for visiting a specialist and have lost out on the R100 and R150 subsidy per visit. Some members have consulted the ‘wrong’ GP more than six times which means they have lost R600 in subsidies. Others have seen the ‘wrong’ specialist more than three times which means they have lost a whopping R450 in subsidies.

The percentage of members who are losing out is just too high and I can only imagine it is due to the member not following the correct process.

If you have chosen a Network GP, please consult this GP only. When your Network GP wants you to see a specialist, he or she needs to call **0860 101 159**. It is your responsibility to ensure that your Network GP makes this call. You cannot call this number to get details of the specialist – they will only talk to your Network GP.



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Remember – if you play the game, Healthcare will pay the bill.

The process Plus Members

The process when consulting a specialist – other than a paediatrician or gynaecologist is as follows:

- You need to be referred to a specialist by your Network GP.
- Your Network GP needs to call **0860 101 159** to get the name and details of an approved specialist. It is important that the GP makes this call – if the specialist she/he wants you to see is not on our list, then the GP can convince us to include the specialist.
- Once we have agreed on the specialist, you need to call **0800 765 432** to obtain an authorisation number for the specialist visit. This is an important step, as it is the only way we can systematically link your membership number with the specialist's practice number so that when the claim comes in, we can automatically pay the R150 subsidy.
- If the date of the appointment changes, you need to let us know so that we have the right information to process the subsidy.
- You need an authorisation number for each and every specialist visit.

Please ensure that your registered dependants are aware of this process so that you are not paying more for the specialist visit than you should.

The process Core Members, a reminder..

Members of the Core Option need to remember that they have no Day-2-Day limit to spend. They belong to a purely network-driven option.

GP Network: Having chosen two Network GPs you need to only visit these GPs. Visits to any other GP will not be paid by the Core Option, you will have to pay for these yourself.

Specialists: Only your Network GP may refer you to a specialist. The specialist limit is R850 for a single member or R1 170 for a family. When this is exhausted, you will have to pay for further visits yourself.

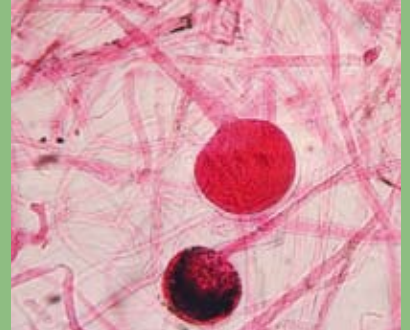
Dentist: Consultations with your Core Network dentist include scaling and polishing, fillings and extractions only. If you have any other treatment you will have to pay for this yourself.

Optician: Consultations with your Core Network optician include a frame every other year, an eye test, and single or bifocal clear lenses only. If you have any other treatment you will have to pay for this yourself.

To make sure you are seeing the correct Network GP or Network dentist or Network optician, you can call **0802 228 922**.



'Tis the season of colds and flu



The best advice I can give you to avoid getting colds and flu this winter is to keep warm at all times. The viruses are all around us and multiply in your body when your body temperature drops, so that old wives' tale about getting a cold if you walk around with wet hair is actually true! It is not the wet hair or the wet clothes that does it – it is the drop in your body temperature that allows the viruses to multiply. When you get cold, the viruses throw a party!

So rather be warm this winter than cold – dress warmly and stay that way.



If you do get the terrible cold that is doing the rounds – rest, drink lots of liquids (but not tea and coffee) and eat simple, healthy meals to help your body repair itself.

Diabetes – the sugar disease

Diabetes is a condition in which the body is not able to use the glucose from the food that you eat. Glucose comes from foods like bread, pasta, cereal, rice, potatoes, fruit and some vegetables. To use glucose as fuel in the body you need insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas.

There are two main types of diabetes – Type 1 and Type 2. They both occur as a result of the pancreas – a small gland situated near the stomach – producing too little or no insulin to manage the glucose in your blood. Left unchecked, diabetes could result in serious illness and loss of life.



Type 1 diabetes

This occurs when the pancreas stops producing insulin and usually starts in young people under the age of 30. The start of Type 1 diabetes is sudden and dramatic and the symptoms include:

- high blood glucose levels
- excessive urination
- excessive thirst
- weight loss
- tiredness.

People with Type 1 diabetes must inject themselves with insulin to survive.



Treating Type 1 diabetes:

If you have **Type 1** diabetes you will need to inject yourself daily with insulin. The aim is to bring your glucose levels into the 4 – 6 mmol/l. However, it is not enough to rely only on the injections, you need to eat healthily and exercise, both of which will help manage your diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes

This occurs when the pancreas produces too little insulin. Up to 80% of people with this condition are not aware of it. Most Type 2 diabetics are over the age of 40 and are overweight and do not exercise. An indicator is often if the weight is carried around your middle. Symptoms of possible Type 2 diabetes include the following:

- tiredness and lack of energy
- irritability
- blurred vision
- frequent infections
- numbness or tingling in the feet
- in women, unexplained vaginal yeast infections.

Whilst Type 2 is not life-threatening, if it is left undiagnosed for any length of time the high blood glucose levels can seriously damage the tissues of the body and can lead to blindness, heart attacks, strokes, kidney failure, impotence and even amputations.

Early detection – the free preventative test offered by the Fund – and a change in lifestyle, particularly losing weight, will often be sufficient.

Treating Type 2 diabetes:

Type 2 diabetes, also known as non-insulin-dependent diabetes, is common in people over 40 who are overweight and may also have either high blood pressure or high cholesterol, or both. In a Type 2 diabetic, the pancreas produces insulin, but the insulin does not work properly, resulting in the wrong message going back to the pancreas, which in turn produces more and more insulin in an effort to move the glucose from the blood to the cells.

Often a change of lifestyle – diet and exercise – is all that is needed to manage Type 2 diabetes. But if left undetected for too long, medication as well as diet and exercise will be needed to bring it under control.



Managing diabetes

Diet

It goes without saying that food is important to all of us. However, it is even more important to eat correctly if you have diabetes so that you can maintain good control of your blood glucose levels. Managing your weight and keeping it well within the acceptable norms is equally important. Diabetics should eat healthy, wholesome food and avoid all refined products made with white flour and sugar.

The following is an indication of what you should be eating:

- Breads and cereals: wholewheat and heavy seeded breads; brown rice, oats and cereals – not refined ones like Rice Crispies!
- Pulses: all dried beans, lentils and peas.
- Non-starchy vegetables: spinach, cabbage, lettuce, squash, etc.
- Limited starchy vegetables: potatoes, sweetcorn and parsnips.
- Fruit.

Limit your sugar intake as this raises your blood glucose levels.

Some other healthy eating tips for diabetics (and people who want to avoid getting Type 2) include:

- Reduce your fat intake to a minimum.
- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Choose a variety of wholesome foods.
- Cut back on salt.
- Drink 1,5 to 2 litres of water per day.

Managing your weight is probably the most important thing you can do to reduce the chances of getting



Type 2 diabetes. If you already have Type 2 diabetes it is vital to reduce your weight accordingly. If you are not sure how to manage your weight, you should consider visiting a dietician. Above all else, do not start any fad diet recommended by a friend or your favourite magazine. Weight management is a life long commitment.

Exercise

Regular exercise lowers your blood glucose levels and has the added benefit of promoting weight loss, reducing stress and enhancing your overall sense of wellness. Always check with your doctor before starting any exercise programme, especially if you have had an inactive lifestyle.

You don't need to join a gym to exercise – walking briskly (should I repeat 'briskly!') 3 to 4 times a week will start you off perfectly. Invest in some good walking shoes and start slowly and build up to walking briskly for between

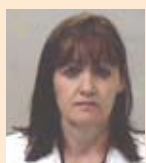
30 and 40 minutes 3 to 4 times a week. Afterwards, do a few stretches to ease your weary muscles.

Start walking up or down the stairs – the important thing is to get active and stay active.

The next issue of Healthcare News will cover obesity and exercise. Controlling your weight is absolutely crucial to managing the Metabolic Syndrome of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes (Types 1 and 2) collectively and individually.



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