

Measure your blood pressure accurately, control it, live longer!

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According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), an estimated 1.28 billion adults aged 30-79 years worldwide have hypertension. Most (two-thirds) live in low- and middle-income countries due to increased risk factors in those populations in recent decades. Hypertension is a significant cause of cardiovascular disease and premature death worldwide. Almost 50% of people living with hypertension are unaware of their condition, putting them at risk of avoidable medical complications and death.



Causes of hypertension and its risks

Hypertension is a common condition in which the long-term pressure of the blood against the walls of the arteries is high enough to lead to health problems like heart disease eventually. Unmodifiable risk factors include a family history of hypertension, over 65, and diabetes or kidney disease comorbidities. More modifiable risk factors are lifestyle habits and pre-existing conditions, including obesity, diabetes, fatigue, inadequate potassium, calcium, and magnesium, physical inactivity, and chronic alcohol consumption. As it stands, over 60% of people with diabetes also have hypertension.

"If you have a family history of heart disease or risk factors for the condition, your doctor may recommend checking your blood pressure twice a year. Taking high blood pressure seriously and following your doctor's treatment recommendations can reduce your risk of serious complications and greatly improve your overall health," states Alan Fritz, acting principal officer at Medshield.

If left untreated, hypertension can lead to heart disease, strokes, kidney disease and even eye diseases. Small changes like adopting a low-sodium diet, regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, limiting alcohol intake, and not smoking can lower your blood pressure by 10–20 mmHg.

How Medshield supports its members

Once a member has been diagnosed, Medshield's Managed Care Programme assist our members with managing this chronic condition in collaboration with the member's respective treating practitioner. In addition, exercise helps you maintain a healthy weight, which helps control blood pressure. Aerobics, flexibility and strength training exercises can help in the long run. Medshield Movement and its sub initiative, ClickFit, are free programmes that allow you to follow exercise routines from HIIT to yoga conducted by our Brand Ambassadors. Adding a simple dynamic exercise routine for 30 to 45 minutes a day will help. Please visit our site www.medshieldmovement.co.za or www.clickfit.co.za for more.

"Nobody can predict what the future holds, and unfortunately, sometimes the sudden onset of illness or an accident are common aspects of life. At the same time, it is impossible to predict the emotional toll such occurrences can take accurately. One can at least plan for it financially. While you or a loved one requires medical care, you don't want to worry about whether or not you will face financial ruin thanks to hospital and procedural costs. Here at Medshield, we are simply a cut above other medical aid schemes in South Africa, and joining us as a member means giving yourself and your loved ones the best shot at a healthy, happy life," states Fritz.

All our benefit plans allow you the freedom to visit your doctor for a general appointment at any time (subject to conditions) to monitor your overall health. A blood pressure check automatically forms part of each visit to monitor your vitals.

"Medshield would like to encourage its members and the public to check their blood pressure and monitor it regularly. Only a few minutes could save your life," Fritz adds.

Many people feel that medical aid schemes cost too much, and because they can cover their own day-to-day doctors' expenses, they might think that there is no point in investing in an appropriate coverage plan that suits their particular needs. "Having the right plan means you won't need to rely on state clinics and hospitals for care. It also means you can have tests, screenings, and procedures done early without waiting to save enough cash for it (and potentially worsening your condition). Healthcare does not always just require hospital stays, either – sometimes other expenses appear in physiotherapy, dental visits, and even costly chronic medication that most would struggle to cover each month," concludes Fritz.

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