

2ND EDITION NEWSLETTER 2024

SAVE THE DATE! OUR 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

is just around the corner. On 27 June 2024 at 10:00, members can join the meeting via video conferencing at one of the designated venues. To learn more, visit www.engenmed.co.za.



DIABETES AND HEART DISEASE

These are potentially life-saving actions: **regular health checks** and **innovative predictive analysis** create a good chance of identifying and then treating serious diseases early.

This approach ensures investment into one's lifespan and health span. How is this being applied to tackling common diseases like diabetes and heart disease?

PREDICTIVE MODELLING CHANGES THE GAME

Through analysing patterns in a specific way, future health outcomes can be predicted. The **Disease Prevention Programme** uses advanced predictive modelling to identify members who are at high risk of type 2 diabetes or heart disease. These two diseases have a significant impact on lifespan and how many of those years will be spent in good health.

According to the International Diabetes Federation, around 1 in 10 South Africans have diabetes, but about half of them don't know they have the disease. Diabetes is a leading cause of death among South African women, and the disease has tripled in prevalence since 2010.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, 225 South Africans are killed by heart diseases every day. Yet 80% of heart disease and strokes can be prevented.

These diseases are usually only picked up in the late stages, by which time more intensive treatment is required with significant impact on life expectancy. Early intervention, and the right short-term and long-term support are very important. The earlier the onset of illness is detected, and steps put in place to reverse or stop disease progression, the better the health outcomes.

WHAT HAPPENS ONCE PREDICTIVE MODELLING IDENTIFIES SOMEONE AT RISK OF DIABETES OR HEART DISEASE?

It's really quick and simple to pick up the early warning signs of these illnesses through a standard health check for random or fasting blood glucose levels, blood pressure, cholesterol levels and a weight assessment, done at a general practitioner (GP), clinic or pharmacy. Through the results of these tests, advanced predictive modelling identifies at risk members who are eligible for registration on the Disease Prevention Programme.

Once you have been identified as eligible to register on the Programme, a Health Coach will contact you and ask you to visit your Premier Plus GP. Your doctor will confirm your disease risk and ask you for consent to enrol you onto the Disease Prevention Programme.

The Programme is aimed at reducing the risk of developing full-blown disease and provides cover for a set of blood tests, medicine if necessary, and access to a Health Coach for 12 months, to support you in tracking and improving your health.

During, or at the end of the Programme, your Premier Plus GP will guide on the next steps to take. This may include continuing with the changes made to your diet and exercise or continuing with the medicine prescribed.

Through early disease detection, and taking charge, we can live for as many years as possible in better health and enjoy a better quality of life, so that we are not limited by poor health. An annual health check gives one an important baseline – a way to track how one is doing year-on-year, in doing the right thing and staying healthy.

Engen Medical Benefit Fund covers the cost of annual health checks and provides the benefits of the Disease Prevention Programme to keep you healthy and have a better, longer life. All you must do is to get tested!





WHY IS PERSISTENT, ELEVATED BLOOD PRESSURE A 'SILENT KILLER'?

Almost half of South Africans have this condition. It doesn't always show symptoms, yet it causes heart attacks, strokes and more.

Could you have high blood pressure and not know it? Are your lifestyle choices fuelling this disease? For Masechaba Molete, a diagnosis of hypertension at age 31, in 2015, came as an absolute shock. "I had no symptoms at all. My blood pressure was so high that I was at risk of a stroke", she says.

QUICK AND EASY – A BLOOD PRESSURE TEST CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

World Hypertension Day is observed every year on 17 May

Go for a quick, non-invasive blood pressure check with a nurse at a pharmacy or clinic, or at your GP where a band around your upper arm that tightens slightly as it is pumped full of air will measure your blood pressure.

It'll give you two readings, for instance 120 over 80. The top number refers to 'systolic' pressure – the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The bottom number refers to your blood pressure when your heart rests, known as 'diastolic' pressure.

These readings are all it takes to understand your hypertension risk, and to protect your health.

Dr Deepak Patel, Clinical Specialist at Discovery Vitality, explains, "A healthy blood pressure, according to the American Heart Association, is below 120/80 mm Hg. When your blood pressure is greater than 130/80 mm Hg on more than two different occasions, it is likely that you have a condition called 'hypertension' or persistently high blood pressure. Catch it early and you can

manage and reverse it with the right lifestyle interventions, ensuring your quality of life and health for years to come.

Hypertension often occurs with other chronic lifestyle diseases such as high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes or obesity and it's important to assess every patient for these diseases as well. Moreover, it is important to look for complications associated with hypertension such as kidney, eye or heart disease. Blood tests, urine tests, chest X-rays and an electrocardiogram are often done as part of a complete assessment.

WHAT IS HYPERTENSION AND WHY IS IT DANGEROUS?

Dr Patel explains: "Blood pressure refers to the force exerted by the blood against the walls of blood vessels. Blood pressure is determined both by the amount of blood your heart pumps and the amount of resistance to blood flow in your arteries. The more blood your heart pumps and the narrower your arteries, the higher your blood pressure."

And that's what hypertension is – a condition in which your blood vessels experience persistent, abnormally high pressure from the blood flowing through them. This causes damage to the vessels. Hypertension also causes heart disease and heart attacks as your heart must work harder to pump blood through your body. High blood pressure develops over years and even without symptoms, damage to blood vessels and the heart continues. "Unmanaged hypertension is very dangerous as it leads to aneurysms (weak spots and bulging in your blood vessels) and strokes, kidney failure, blindness, and cognitive impairment," adds Dr Patel.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF HYPERTENSION?

Most patients with hypertension **may not have any symptoms** at all. To others, it may present as headaches, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, heart palpitations and nose bleeds. All of these could be signs that your heart and blood vessels are under too much pressure.

Around the world, 10 million people die prematurely each year from hypertension and the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 1.56 billion adults will live with the condition by 2025.

Almost half of South Africans live with high blood pressure and it is estimated that nearly half of South Africans with hypertension have never done a check and are unaware that they have it.

Essential or primary hypertension	Secondary Hypertension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no cause for the high blood pressure can be found impacted on by modifiable risk factors – our lifestyle choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is an underlying cause for hypertension, such as kidney disease, vascular disease or tumours

WHICH LIFESTYLE CHOICES ARE PUTTING YOU AT RISK OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), the biggest risk factors for hypertension are:

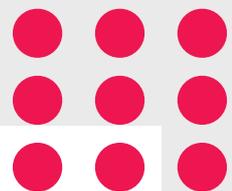
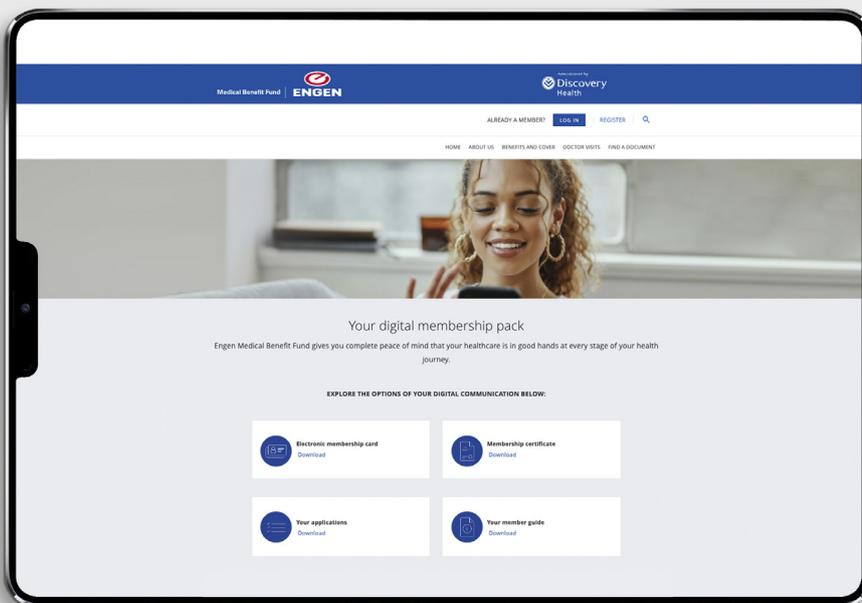
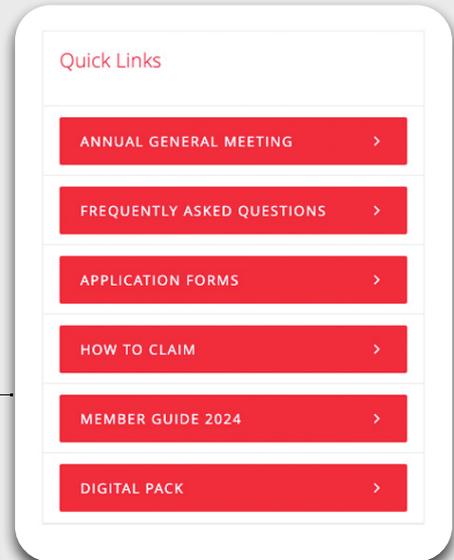
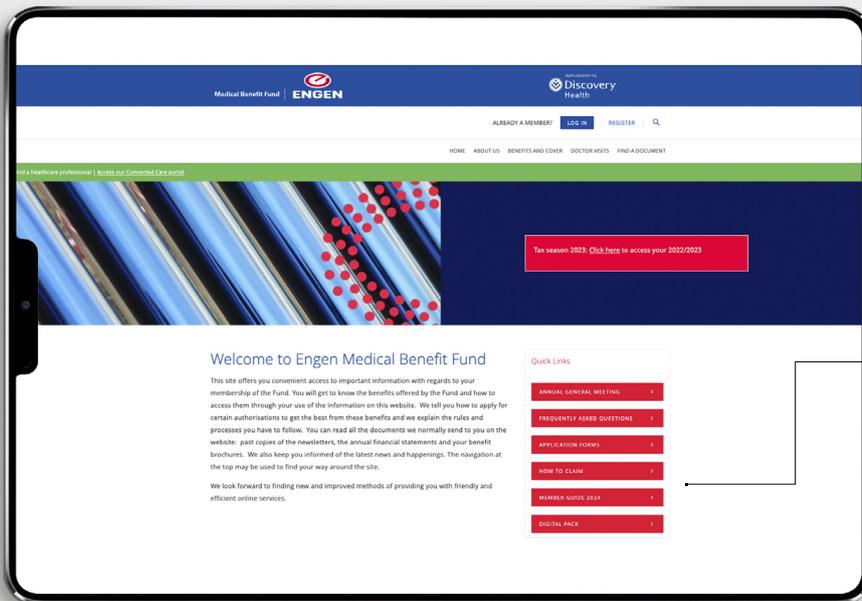
- The older you are, the higher the risk of high blood pressure.
- High blood pressure and serious complications, such as stroke, heart attack and kidney failure, is particularly common among people of African descent, often developing at an earlier age than in other races.
- The more you weigh, the more blood you need to supply oxygen and nutrients to your tissues. As the volume of blood circulated through your blood vessels increases, so does the pressure on your artery walls.
- High blood pressure tends to run in families, with a genetic predisposition putting certain people at higher risk.
- People who are inactive tend to have higher heart rates.
- High levels of stress can lead to a temporary increase in blood pressure.
- Smoking or chewing tobacco immediately raises your blood pressure temporarily, and the chemicals in tobacco can damage the lining of your artery walls. This can cause your arteries to narrow and increase your risk of heart disease. Second-hand smoke can also increase your heart disease risk.
- Heavy drinking can damage your heart – one drink a day for a woman and more than two drinks a day for men – may affect your blood pressure
- Making unhealthy food choices, including eating too much salt. The average South African eats three or fewer portions of fruit and vegetables a day, instead of the recommended five, while we consume far too much sugar and salt.
- Certain chronic conditions, such as kidney disease, diabetes, and sleep apnoea, may also increase your risk of high blood pressure.

CHANGE YOUR LIFESTYLE HABITS FOR HEALTHIER BLOOD PRESSURE!

Hypertension can be managed by adapting your lifestyle towards healthier habits.

 Understand the impact of your diet on your health	
 Avoid or drink only moderate amounts of alcohol	
 Get physical	
 Don't smoke and always manage stress	
 Know your blood pressure numbers	

YOUR DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP PACK



Engen Medical Benefit Fund has embraced the digital age, and we're excited to introduce our Digital Membership Pack that is now on [engenmed.co.za](https://www.engenmed.co.za)

With this new feature, you can effortlessly access your membership details with just a click. It's a secure and convenient way for find up-to-date information about everything you need to maximize your Engen Medical Benefit Fund benefits and services:

- Your electronic membership card
- Your membership certificate
- Your applications
- Your Member Guide

Feel free to explore and make the most of this user-friendly digital experience!