



Western Cape  
Government

Health



PACK  
Practical Approach to Care Kit

3

## Information and Advice for the Home: **Chronic conditions at home**



Practical Approach to Care Kit

PACK Home · 2021

# Welcome to PACK Home

The Practical Approach to Care Kit – PACK – is used by nurses, doctors and community health workers in their everyday work to care for patients at the clinic and in the community – **PACK Adult**, **PACK Adolescent**, **PACK Child** and **PACK Community**.



**PACK Home** is designed for people seeking more information about how to care for their own health and the health of their family at home.

**PACK Home** is published in small volumes and has been made available in several languages. It covers a wide range of topics, including staying COVID-19 safe, managing COVID-19 in the home, understanding the COVID-19 vaccine and coping with a chronic condition.



Browse or download **PACK Home** volumes from [www.coronawise.org.za](http://www.coronawise.org.za)

**PACK Home** was developed by the Knowledge Translation Unit, University of Cape Town Lung Institute, in partnership with the Western Cape Department of Health. We thank Western Cape Department of Health and their clinicians and managers for their valuable contribution to this document. See the list of their names on our website [www.knowledgetranslation.co.za](http://www.knowledgetranslation.co.za).

**DISCLAIMER:** This information should not be considered as medical advice. It is not a replacement for a visit with a nurse, doctor or other healthcare professional. If you have concerns about your individual medical situation, please see a healthcare professional. This information is provided on an 'as is' basis without any warranties regarding accuracy, relevance, usefulness or fitness for purpose. You use this information at your sole risk.

Last updated: 21 May 2021

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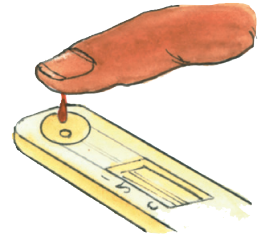
# Look out for a chronic condition

- Diagnosing a chronic condition early will make it easier to treat.
- Many people with one chronic condition develop another.

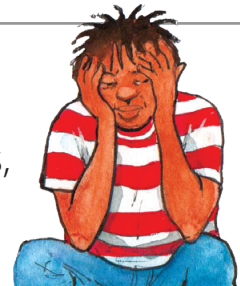


If you have a cough, weight loss or night sweats, **check for TB.**

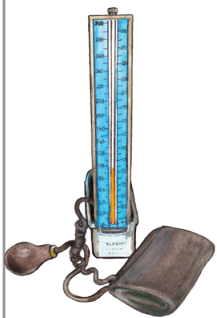
If you do not know your HIV status, have a new partner or are pregnant, **get an HIV test.**



If in the past month, you felt down, depressed or hopeless or had little interest or pleasure in doing things, **talk to your healthcare worker about depression.**

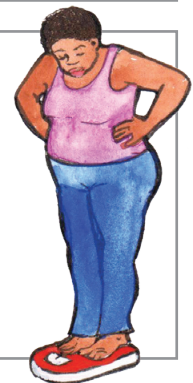


If you drink more than four drinks per session, use illegal drugs or misuse prescription or over-the-counter medication, **talk to your healthcare worker about substance abuse.**



**Check your blood pressure (BP) for hypertension.** Your healthcare worker will tell you when you need to recheck it.

If you are over 40 years or you are overweight and don't do any exercise, **have a test for diabetes.**



If you are a woman, **have a pap smear to check for cervical cancer** (of the mouth of the womb) – every 10 years after the age of 30, or every 3 years if you have HIV.

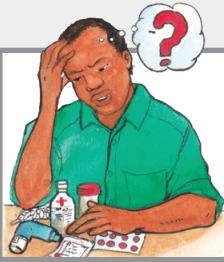
Have a **check for breast cancer** if you are a woman over 40 years or you notice a change in your breast.



# Having a chronic condition

- A chronic condition is a health issue that is long-term or lifelong.
- If untreated, it can cause complications that can make you unwell and unable to cope with everyday life.
- The goal of treating a chronic condition is to control it and to prevent complications.

## Reach your goal for your chronic condition



1

### Understand your chronic condition

Read about your chronic condition in PACK Home Volume 3.

2



### Have a healthy lifestyle

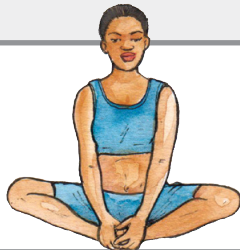
See page 4 for tips on having a healthy lifestyle.



3

### Look after your mental health

See page 5 for tips on how to look after your mental health.



4

### Take your medication reliably

See page 6 to check how to take your treatment reliably.



5

### Keep your appointments

See page 7 about when to visit the clinic.



6

### Get help when you need it

See page 29 for tips on how to get help when you need it.



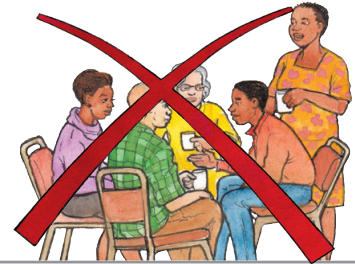
# Protect yourself from severe COVID-19

Having a chronic condition means you are more at risk of severe COVID-19.

## Avoid catching coronavirus

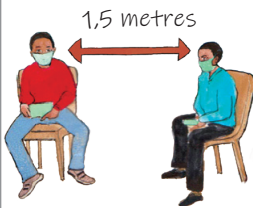
### Avoid others as much as possible:

- Don't go out unless necessary. Ask others to do the shopping and fetch your grants and medications.
- Avoid having visitors in your home.



### If you do go out or spend time with others:

- Keep physical distance.
- Avoid crowds, close contact and confined spaces.
- Wear a mask.
- Sit outside or open the windows.
- Wash your hands often.

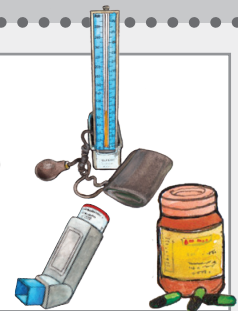


## Keep yourself healthy

If you become unwell, seek healthcare promptly.



Look after your chronic conditions. This might help prevent severe COVID-19 if you do catch coronavirus.



Get vaccinated against COVID-19. Register to be vaccinated here: <https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za>



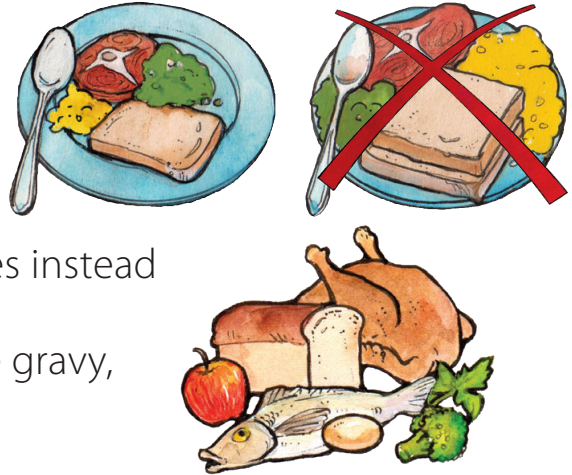
**If others at home have COVID-19 or had contact with COVID-19, try to live separately until the isolation time is over.**

# Have a healthy lifestyle

What can you do to have a healthier lifestyle? Work on one thing at a time:

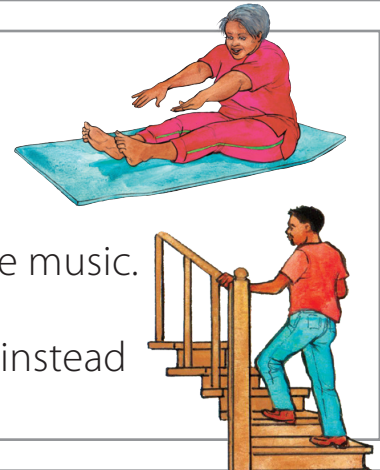
## Eat healthily

- Eat a variety of foods.
- If you eat a lot, reduce portion sizes.
- Increase fruit, vegetables, nuts and legumes.
- Choose brown bread or rice or potatoes instead of white bread or white rice.
- Eat less salt. Avoid processed foods like gravy, stock cubes or packet soup.
- Reduce or cut out sugar.



## Get active

- Aim for at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise 5 days a week.
- Try some home exercises in your home or yard.
- Do the sweeping, garden or dance to your favourite music.
- Do an exercise programme on TV or online.
- Walk instead of using transport, and take the stairs instead of the lift.



## Don't smoke or use drugs

If you need help to quit, ask your healthcare worker.



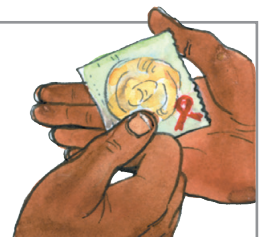
## Stop or limit alcohol

- If you drink alcohol, limit intake to less than 2 drinks a day and don't drink on at least 2 days of the week.
- If you need help to quit, ask your healthcare worker.



## Have safer sex

- Have only 1 partner at a time.
- If you don't know your HIV status, have an HIV test.
- If needed, use condoms and reliable family planning.



**Take action to have a healthy lifestyle! Even a little will help to improve your mental health and control your chronic condition/s.**

# Look after your mental health

- Having a chronic condition can feel stressful.
- Make sure you take care of your mental health and that of your family.

## Know the facts.

- Make sure you understand your chronic condition and how to look after yourself.
- Ignore gossip and fake news – listen to advice from trusted sources.



**Have a routine for your day**  
Structure your day by setting times for sleeping, meals, exercise, work and chores.



## Stay connected

- Have regular contact with those you trust and who can support you.
- Spend time with the supportive people in your home.



## Get active



## Get enough sleep

## Take time to relax

- Find a creative or fun activity to do.



- Do a relaxing breathing exercise each day.

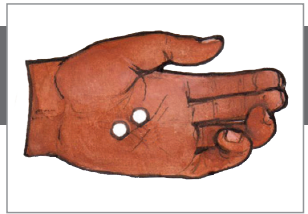
## Seek help if you need it

- If you are feeling stressed and need to talk about it, reach out to someone you trust or call a helpline. See page 34.
- Read about getting help on page 29.





# Take your medication reliably



Take your medication to help control your condition, prevent complications and keep you well.

## What can help you take your medication reliably?

### Take action!

Address the things that make it difficult to take your medication reliably

#### Don't understand

Read about your condition and how medication will help.



#### Can't read the instructions

Get help to read the instructions.



#### Too stressed to remember or care

Discuss with someone you trust.



#### Alcohol or drug abuse

Discuss with your healthcare worker.

#### Difficulty collecting medication

Get help to collect it.



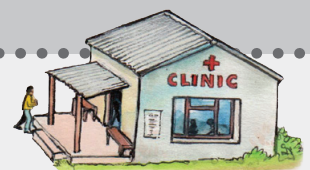
#### Medication has side effects

Check the side effects in the medication list on page 30.



### Take medication as instructed

- Make sure you know what your medication is for, and how to take it. If unsure, ask your healthcare worker.
- When you attend appointments, take all your medication with you.
- If you run out or stop your medication, visit your healthcare facility to start it again.
- Ask someone you trust to remind you to take your medication.
- If you have a pillbox, place each day's medication in it.
- Do not share your medication with others.
- Try to fit taking medication into your daily routine.



Read about your medication in the list on page 30



# Know when to go to the clinic

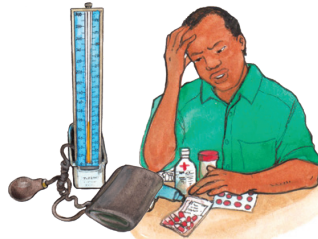
- Hospitals and clinics are busy. It might be easy to catch coronavirus at a hospital or clinic.
- Avoid unnecessary clinic visits.

## Visit the clinic or hospital urgently if you or your child have:

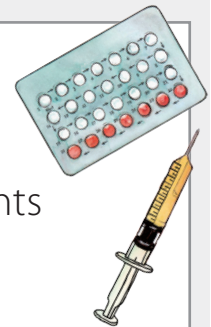
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Severe diarrhoea and vomiting
- Become confused
- A severe headache with vomiting
- A child too unwell to drink

## Make sure you do visit your clinic for these reasons:

Keep your **chronic condition appointments**. Restart your treatment if you stopped it. Ask for extra supplies of treatment if possible, so you never run out.



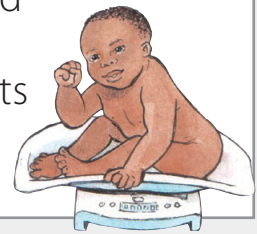
For **family planning** – keep the appointments on your clinic card.



If you are **pregnant** to check your and your baby's health – keep the appointments on your maternity card.



For **well baby and child checks** to get immunisations and to monitor growth – keep the appointments on the Road to Health booklet.

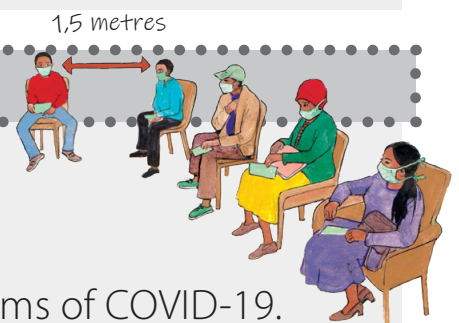


## If you are unwell:

- If you have COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever, sore throat), contact your healthcare facility or the COVID-19 hotline.
- Visit the clinic to check for complications of your condition or medication.
- If you live with someone who has TB or a cough, go to the clinic for TB tests if you are coughing, losing weight, having fevers or sweats.
- If you get worse or do not get better, visit your healthcare facility.

## If you visit a healthcare facility:

- Wash your hands before and after your visit.
- Wear a mask.
- Keep 1,5 metres away from others.
- Tell the healthcare facility staff if you have symptoms of COVID-19.



# Coping with more than one chronic condition

- Having more than one chronic condition can bring extra challenges:
  - You need to attend more healthcare appointments.
  - You need to take more medication and may have extra side effects.
  - You may need help looking after yourself.
  - You are more likely to experience mental health problems.
- Aim to control each condition, prevent its complications and limit the problems that can come with having more than one condition.

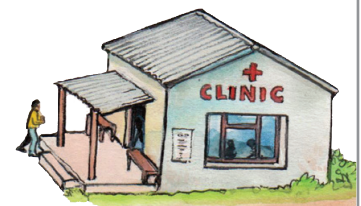
## Sort out your medication

- Take all your medication with you when you visit your healthcare worker.
- Some medications can interact with one another or cause extra side effects. Check with your healthcare worker if there are any medications you should stop, decrease or replace.



## Schedule your appointments carefully

Try to have your check-up and get the medication for all your conditions at once.



## Communicate well with your healthcare worker/s

- Try to have one healthcare worker helping you look after yourself and all your conditions.
- If not possible, inform each healthcare worker about your other conditions, any issues that arise with each condition or changes in medication.
- Make sure your concerns and needs are heard. Don't be afraid to ask questions.



## Find someone to help you cope

- Learn together about your conditions and treatment.
- Invite them to attend your appointments with you.
- Make sure they know what medication you take.
- Discuss your healthcare wishes should you become unwell.



# Hypertension

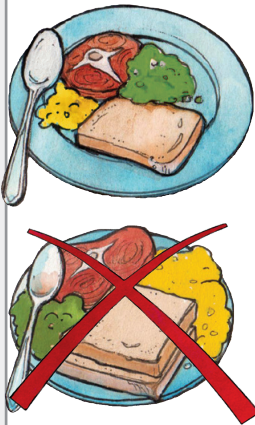
## What is hypertension?

- Hypertension is high blood pressure (BP) that puts strain on the heart, blood vessels and kidneys.
- Hypertension does not usually cause you to feel sick, stressed or have a headache.
- Hypertension increases the risk of heart attack, stroke (brain attack) and kidney failure.
- The goal of hypertension treatment is to keep your blood pressure under 140/90 or if you are 65 years or older, under 160/90.

## What can help you reach your goal for hypertension?

### Take action!

#### Eat healthily



- Eat a variety of foods.
- If you eat a lot, reduce portion sizes.
- Increase fruit, vegetables, nuts and legumes.
- Choose brown bread, brown rice or potatoes instead of white bread or white rice.
- Use less salt. Avoid processed foods like gravy, stock cubes or packet soup.
- Reduce or cut out sugar.



#### Stop smoking



#### Get active

- Aim for at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise 5 days a week.
- Try some exercises in your home or yard.
- Do the sweeping or dance to music.
- Take part in an exercise programme on TV or online.



#### Stop or limit alcohol

- If you drink alcohol, limit your intake to less than 2 drinks a day and don't drink on at least 2 days of the week.
- If you need help to quit, ask your healthcare worker.



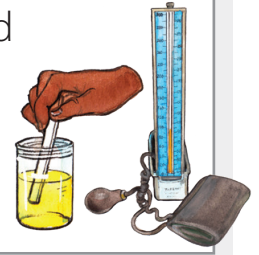
## Keep a check on your condition



### Watch your weight

Try to lose weight if you can.

Attend your appointments at least once a year to check your blood pressure and look out for diabetes and for complications like heart attacks, strokes and kidney damage.



## Take your medication as instructed

- Take medication for life to prevent heart attacks, strokes and kidney damage.
- Take medication as instructed every day, even if you feel well. It should never run out.
- If you stopped your medication, restart it.
- Most people need more than one medication to control their blood pressure.
- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you have too much medication left over or are unsure how to take it, ask your healthcare worker.

## Know when to seek healthcare

### Seek healthcare urgently if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain - it may be a heart attack.
- Difficulty breathing
- If you use enalapril and develop swelling of the tongue or face
- Sudden weakness of an arm, leg, side of face - may be a stroke
- Sudden loss of speech or vision - may be a stroke



### Make contact with your healthcare facility if:

- You run out of medication.
- You don't understand how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.



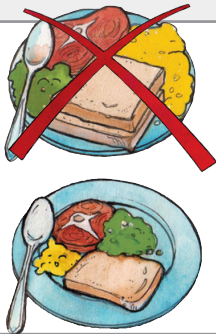
# Diabetes

## What is diabetes?

- Diabetes is lifelong. It affects how the body gets energy from food, resulting in too much sugar in the blood, but not enough for the muscles and brain.
- High blood sugar leads to hypertension, strokes, heart attacks and damage to the kidneys, eyes and feet.
- The goal of diabetes treatment is an HbA<sub>1c</sub> below 8% (ideally below 7%). HbA<sub>1c</sub> reflects how sugary the blood has been for the past 3 months.

## What can help you reach your goal for diabetes?

### Take action!



#### Eat healthily

- Cut down on starchy food like white bread, samp, noodles, potato, butternut, mielies, white rice.
- Avoid sugary drinks, sweet treats and alcohol.
- Avoid sugar and honey. Use artificial sweetener instead.
- Eat regular meals. Cut down on portion sizes.

#### Stop smoking



#### Get active

- Aim for at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise 5 days a week.
- Try some exercises in your home or yard.
- Do the sweeping or dance to music.
- Take part in an exercise programme on TV or online.



### Keep a check on your condition

#### Look after your feet to prevent ulcers and amputation.

- Inspect your feet and shoes daily.
- Keep your feet clean and dry between the toes.
- Don't walk bare-foot. Wear shoes that fit.
- Don't cut your corns or calluses yourself.
- Don't burn your feet with water or heaters.



#### Watch your weight

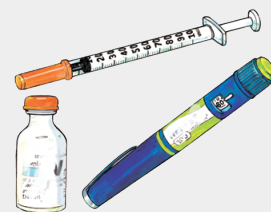
Try to lose weight if you can.

#### Check your glucose if you can

If your glucose is over 10, discuss it with your healthcare worker.

## Take your medication as instructed

- Take your medication daily for life to prevent heart attacks, strokes and damage to the kidneys, eyes and feet.
- If you stopped your medication, restart it.
- Take your medication with meals.
- If you take insulin, use and store it correctly.
- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you have too much medication left over or are unsure how to take it, ask your healthcare worker.



**If you feel dizzy, sweaty, shaky or confused, you may have low blood sugar. Eat or drink something sugary immediately. Follow with starchy food like a sandwich. If you are no better or it happens more than once, seek healthcare.**

## Know when to seek healthcare

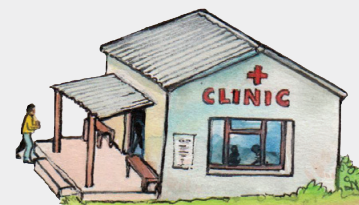
**If you have any of the following, seek healthcare urgently:**

- Chest pain - it may be a heart attack
- Difficulty breathing
- If you use enalapril and develop swelling of the tongue or face
- Sudden weakness of an arm, leg, side of face - may be a stroke
- Sudden loss of speech or vision - may be a stroke
- Low blood sugar not improving with sugar-water



**Make contact with your healthcare facility if:**

- You have more than one low blood sugar episode.
- You have a sore on your foot.
- You run out of medication.
- You don't understand how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.



# HIV

## What is HIV?

- The **H**uman **I**mmunodeficiency **V**irus slowly attacks the immune system so that the body cannot protect itself from infections and some cancers. When the body becomes sick, this is called AIDS.
- HIV spreads through having sex without a condom, blood, pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- The goal of HIV treatment is an 'undetectable viral load' - this is when the virus level is so low that the immune system can work normally.

## What can help you reach your goal for HIV?

### Take action!

#### Take antiretroviral treatment for life.

There is no cure for HIV, but lifelong daily antiretroviral medication can prevent AIDS.



#### Look after yourself

- Have a healthy lifestyle. See page 4 for tips on having a healthy lifestyle.
- Look after your mental health. See page 5 for tips on looking after your mental health.
- Cut out or cut down on alcohol.



#### Be safe

Avoid spreading HIV to those you love.

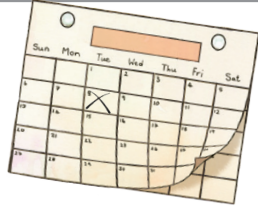
- Use a condom, even if your partner has HIV or you are on antiretroviral treatment.
- Have one partner at a time.
- Test your partner and children.



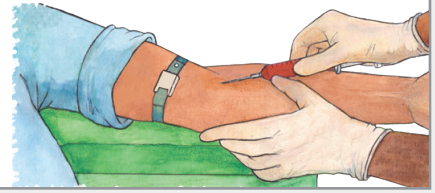


## Keep a check on your condition

Attend your check-ups at the clinic regularly.



Know your viral load result – aim to keep it 'undetectable.'



Look out for symptoms that you might be getting sick – especially TB symptoms (cough, weight loss, drenching night sweats).

## Take your medication as instructed

- Take your antiretroviral medication at the right time every day, even when you are feeling healthy so that the virus stays at very low levels.
- If you miss doses, virus levels rise and resistance to antiretroviral medication can occur.
- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you have too much medication left over or are unsure how to take it, ask your healthcare worker.

## Know when to seek healthcare

**Visit the healthcare facility urgently today if you have any of the following:**

- Are breathing too fast to speak properly
- Are vomiting everything
- Have a headache and are vomiting
- Have yellow skin and eyes
- Are unable to swallow



**Make contact with your healthcare facility if:**

- You run out of medication.
- You don't know how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.
- You develop a side effect of your medication.



# Tuberculosis (TB)

## What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

- TB is a lung disease caught by breathing in a germ that spreads in the air through coughing, sneezing and spitting.
- Without treatment, a person with TB disease will spread TB germs to 10 to 15 people every year.
- Drug resistant TB (DR-TB) is TB that does not improve with medication because the TB germ is stronger than standard TB medication. DR-TB can be cured, but it needs more medication and a longer time on treatment.
- The goal of treatment is to finish the full course of medication as instructed so that all TB germs are killed.

## What can help you reach your goal for TB?

### Take action!

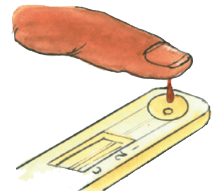
#### Take the full course of TB treatment.

TB can be cured if you take your medication correctly.



#### Test for HIV and treat it

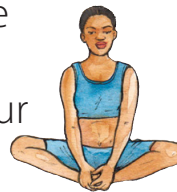
It is common to get TB if you have HIV. Treating your HIV, will help cure your TB.



- Have a healthy lifestyle. See page 4 for tips on having a healthy lifestyle.

#### Look after yourself

- Look after your mental health. See page 5 for tips on looking after your mental health.



- Cut out or cut down on alcohol.



#### Be safe

Avoid spreading TB.



- Wash your hands regularly.
- Keep the windows open where possible.
- Check for TB among your family, friends and workmates.



- Cough into your elbow.
- Wearing a mask will decrease the spread of TB, especially before you start treatment and for the first few weeks of treatment.



## Keep a check on your condition

Attend your check-ups regularly at the clinic.



Provide sputum samples to check your TB is responding to the treatment.



Expect your symptoms to get better. If you develop new symptoms or your symptoms get worse, report this promptly.



## Take your medication as instructed

TB can be cured if you take your medication correctly. TB will become worse and perhaps drug resistant if you forget or stop medication.

- You need to take TB medication for 7 days a week until the course is complete (at least six months).
- Check with a nurse, doctor or pharmacist before using treatment from a shop or traditional healer – it may interfere with TB medication.
- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you have too much medication left over or are unsure how to take it, ask your healthcare worker.

## Know when to seek healthcare

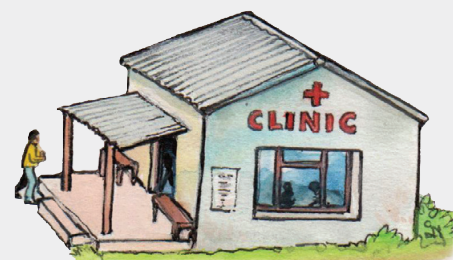
### Visit the healthcare facility urgently today if you have any of the following:

- Are breathing too fast to speak properly
- Are coughing lots of blood
- Have a skin rash that also involves your mouth
- Have yellow skin and eyes



### Make contact with your healthcare facility if:

- You run out of medication.
- You don't know how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.
- You develop a side effect of your medication.



# COPD/Emphysema

## What is COPD?

- Chronic (long-term) Obstructive (blocked) Pulmonary Disease is also known as emphysema or chronic bronchitis. There is damage to the lungs, usually caused by smoking and/or TB.
- COPD is not the same as asthma, but they sometimes occur together.
- People with COPD cough up sputum and become breathless easily.
- The goal of COPD treatment is to have as few COPD symptoms as possible and to prevent attacks.

## What can help you reach your goal for COPD?

### Take action!

#### Stop smoking

- Stopping smoking is the mainstay of controlling COPD.
- If you need help to quit, ask your healthcare worker.



#### Get active

Aim for at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise 5 days a week. Exercise within your limits.

- Try some exercises in your home or yard.
- Do the sweeping, work in the garden or dance to your favourite music.
- Take part in an exercise programme on TV or online.
- Walk instead of using transport. Take the stairs instead of the lift.



### Keep a check on your condition



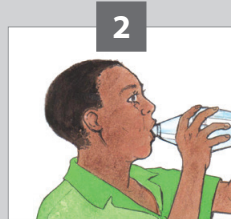
- Tell your healthcare worker about your symptoms at every visit.
- Your healthcare worker might check your peak expiratory flow to see how forcefully you can breathe out.

## Take your medication as instructed

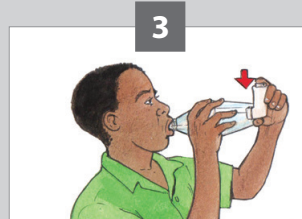
- COPD is difficult to treat and cannot be cured, but medication should help relieve symptoms.
- Be sure you know what your medication is for and how much and how often to take it.
- Inhalers work only if used correctly. A spacer helps to deliver medication to the lungs and to prevent a sore mouth.
- Make sure you can use an inhaler (and spacer if needed) properly:



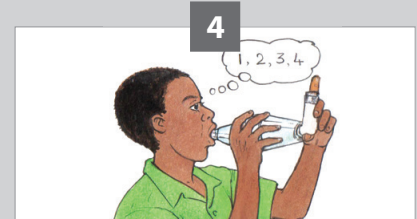
1  
Shake.



2  
Seal your lips.



3  
Press and breathe in.



4  
Take 4 breaths keeping spacer in mouth.

- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you are unsure how to use your medication, ask your healthcare worker.

## Know when to seek healthcare

**If you are breathing too fast to speak properly, visit the healthcare facility urgently today.**



**Make contact with your healthcare facility if:**

- You run out of medication.
- You don't understand how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.



# Asthma

## What is asthma?

- Asthma is a lifelong lung disease.
- It causes attacks of wheezing, breathing difficulties, a tight chest and coughing.
- Asthma attacks occur when something (a trigger) bothers the lungs.
- The goal of asthma treatment is to have as few symptoms as possible and to prevent attacks.

## What can help you reach your goal for asthma?

### Take action!

#### Stop smoking

If you need help to quit, ask your healthcare worker.



#### Manage your triggers

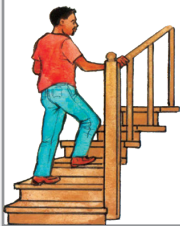
Identify and avoid things that might trigger your asthma symptoms.



#### Get active

Aim for at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise 5 days a week.

- Try some exercises in your home or yard.
  - Do the sweeping, work in the garden or dance to your favourite music.
  - Take part in an exercise programme on TV or online.
  - Walk instead of using transport. Take the stairs instead of the lift.



### Keep a check on your condition

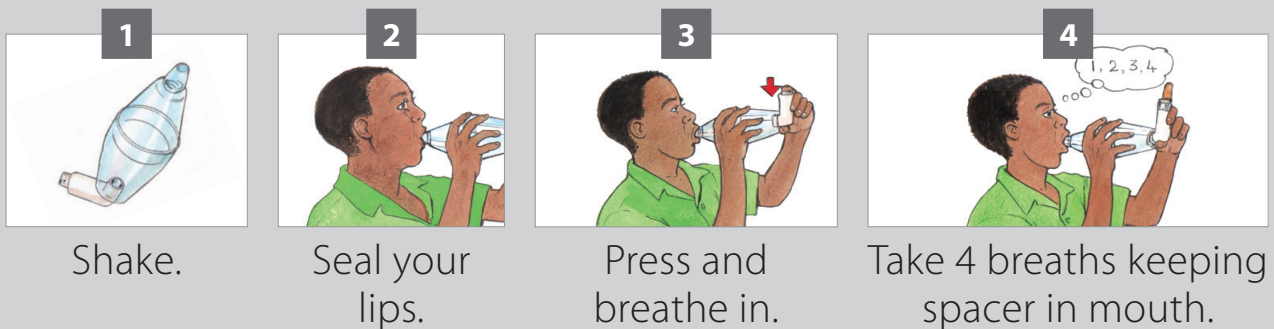


- Tell your healthcare worker about your symptoms at every visit.
- Your healthcare worker might check your peak expiratory flow to see how forcefully you can breathe out.

## Take your medication as instructed

Prevent asthma attacks by taking your medication regularly and treating an attack as soon as it starts.

- Know what your medication is for and how to take it.
- There are two kinds of inhalers: relievers and controllers:
  - The reliever (e.g. salbutamol) relieves symptoms but does not control asthma.
  - The controller (e.g. budesonide, beclomethasone or fluticasone) prevents but does not relieve symptoms. This is the mainstay of treatment.
- Inhalers work only if used correctly. A spacer helps to deliver medication to the lungs and to prevent a sore mouth.
- Make sure you can use an inhaler (and spacer if needed) properly:



- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If unsure how to use your medication, ask your healthcare worker.

## Know when to seek healthcare

**If you are breathing too fast to speak properly, visit the healthcare facility urgently today.**



**Make contact with your healthcare facility if:**

- You run out of medication.
- You don't understand how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.



# Depression and anxiety

## What are depression and anxiety?

- Depression and anxiety are illnesses that affect your mood and feelings so that it becomes difficult to cope with everyday life.
- A person with depression and anxiety cannot control their symptoms. They are not lazy or weak.
- The goal of treatment is to lift your mood and feelings so that you are able to cope with everyday life.

## What can help you reach your goal for depression and anxiety?

### Take action!



#### Get enough sleep.

- Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, fizzy drinks) and smoking for several hours before bed.
- Try to have regular bedtime and wake-up times.
- Avoid afternoon naps.



#### Get active.

- Regular exercise will help your mood.

#### Avoid alcohol and drugs.

- If you need help to quit, ask your healthcare worker.



Do relaxing breathing exercises every day.



Find a creative or fun activity to do.



Spend time with supportive friends and family.

#### Talk to someone you trust.

Talk to a friend, join a support group or phone a helpline. See page 34.





## Keep a check on your condition



- Keep a diary of your moods and how you are coping with everyday life. Expect a gradual improvement with treatment over 4–6 weeks.
- Record any side effects of your medication.
- If you have thoughts of suicide or self-harm, know that these occur commonly in depression and anxiety. Talk to a person you trust and seek healthcare on the same day.

## Take your medication as instructed

Antidepressants can treat both depression and anxiety.

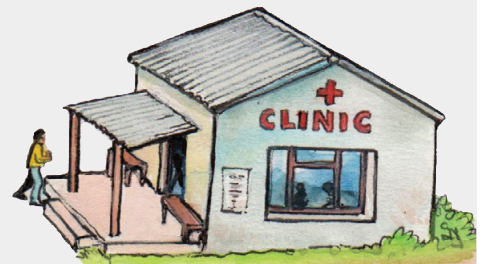
- They usually take 4–6 weeks to start working. You may have some side effects during this time.
- Antidepressants are not addictive. Keep taking the medication even if you feel well.
- Most people take antidepressants for about a year. Only stop or change the medication in discussion with your healthcare worker.
- If you are unsure how to take your medication, ask your healthcare worker for help.
- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.



## Know when to seek healthcare

If you have any of the following, seek healthcare the same day:

- You have persistent thoughts of self-harm or suicide.
- You have run out of medication.



# Cancer

## What is cancer?

- Cancer is a disease in which your cells grow out of control. It can affect any part of the body.
- Getting a cancer diagnosis can be a shock and coping with the tests and treatments is hard.
- The first goal of cancer treatment is to cure the cancer. Many people survive it.
- When it is not possible to cure it, then the goal is to help you cope with having advanced cancer, to prevent it from spreading and to limit your symptoms.

## What can help you reach your goal for cancer?

### Take action!

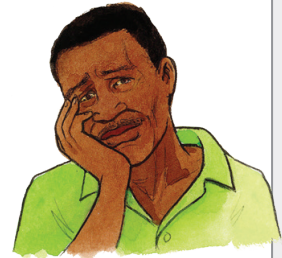


**Have a healthy lifestyle.**  
See tips for having a healthy lifestyle on page 4.



### Look after your mental health

- Allow yourself to feel your feelings: anger, sadness, grief, fear, loneliness.
- Work towards having a positive attitude; look for what is good. Try to find ways in which your cancer has made you a stronger person.

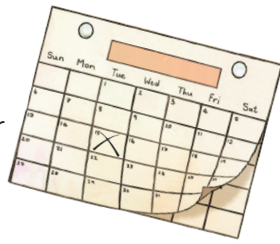


- If you struggle to do this alone, seek help from a counsellor, a trusted friend, a support group or a cancer buddy.
- Consider the effect your cancer has on your loved ones and seek help for them too if need be.
- For more tips on looking after your mental health, see page 5.



## Keep a check on your condition

Make sure you keep your appointments for check-ups and follow-up tests.



Know the signs of your cancer spreading or returning. Contact your healthcare worker if they occur.



## Take your medication as instructed

- Ask your healthcare worker what side effects to expect from your treatment and how to cope with them.
- If you are unsure how to take your medication, ask your healthcare worker for help.



## Know when to seek healthcare



Seek healthcare if you experience troublesome treatment side effects.

Meet with your healthcare worker to plan for your treatment and to choose what care you would like if you become too unwell to decide.



If your cancer spreads and a cure is no longer possible, ask for palliative care to help you and your family cope with the symptoms and stresses of having advanced cancer.

# Epilepsy

## What is epilepsy?

- A fit is caused by abnormal chemical activity in the brain.
- A doctor diagnoses epilepsy after a person has had two or more fits and no treatable cause is found.
- Epilepsy is not a mental illness nor is it infectious. It is usually lifelong.
- Epilepsy can affect anybody, no matter how clever or rich they are.
- The goal of epilepsy treatment is to not have any fits.

## What can help you reach your goal for epilepsy?

### Take action!

#### Manage your triggers



- Identify the things that might trigger your fits.
- Avoid common triggers like flashing lights, video games, alcohol and drugs.



#### Look after yourself



- Have a healthy lifestyle. See page 4 for tips on having a healthy lifestyle.
- Look after your mental health. See page 5 for tips on looking after your mental health.

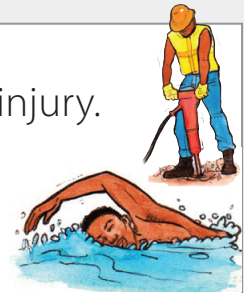


- Get enough sleep.
- Drink sufficient fluids.



#### Be safe

- A fit may cause injury.
- Avoid dangerous situations like swimming alone, walking or cycling on busy roads, heights or operating heavy machinery.
- Do not drive a car if you had a fit in the past year.



### Keep a check on your condition



- Keep a fit diary. Record when you have a fit, how long it lasted and what might have triggered it.
- Take the diary to your appointments to help your healthcare worker decide if and how to adjust your treatment.

## Take your medication as instructed

Prevent fits by taking your medication regularly to avoid injury and brain damage.

- Keep taking your medication every day, even if you have no fits. It should never run out.
- Tell the doctor, nurse or pharmacist about your epilepsy treatment if you get other medication to check that they can be taken safely together.
- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you have too much medication left over or are unsure how to take it, ask your healthcare worker.

## Know when to seek healthcare

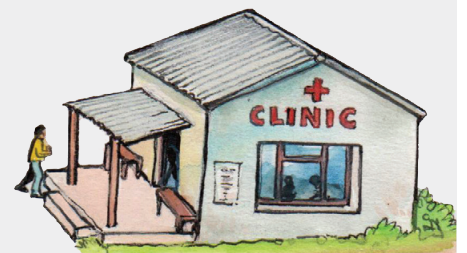
### What to do if someone is having a fit:

- Place them in a safe place.
- Do not put anything in their mouth.
- When the fit stops, lie them on their side and make sure they can breathe properly. They may be confused or sleep for about 20 minutes.
- Get help if the fit continues for more than 3 minutes, if they do not wake up between fits or if they injure themselves during the fit.



### Make contact with your healthcare facility if:

- You run out of medication.
- You don't understand how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.



# Arthritis

## What is arthritis?

- Arthritis is a lifelong condition where the end of the bones in the joints are damaged and worn down.
- This causes pain, stiffness and loss of function in the joints, often the hands, hips, knees, back and neck.
- There is no cure for arthritis. The goal of treatment is to limit pain and stiffness so that you can be as active as possible and cope with everyday activities.

## What can help you reach your goal for arthritis?

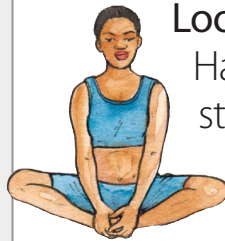
### Take action!

**Be as active as possible,** but rest if your joints suddenly become very painful.



**Look after your mental health.**

Having pain most of the time is stressful. See page 5 for tips on looking after your mental health.



**Lose weight if you need to.** If you are overweight, losing weight might decrease the pain in your knees and feet.



**Do not smoke.**

Stopping smoking may help your pain. If you need help to quit, ask your healthcare worker.



### Keep a check on your condition



- Keep a symptom diary. Record when you have pain, which joints it affects and what might have triggered it.
- Take the diary to your appointments to help the healthcare worker decide if and how to adjust your treatment.

## Take your medication as instructed

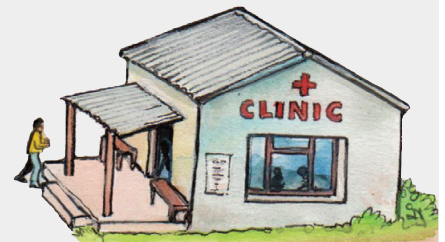
- Take medication for pain when needed. Pain medication can have side effects. Check with your healthcare worker if it is safe for you to take the pain medication and how to take it properly.
- Check the medication list on page 30 to understand how your medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you are unsure how to take your medication, ask your healthcare worker.



## Know when to seek healthcare

Make contact with your healthcare facility if:

- You need more medication.
- You don't know how to take your medication.
- You have an appointment for a check-up.
- You develop a side effect of your medication.

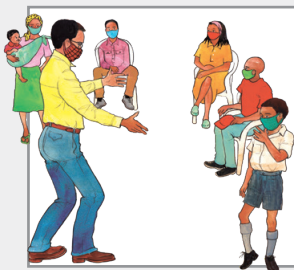


# Get help if you need it

Having a chronic condition can add to existing stresses and problems.



## Seek out these resources to help tackle your problems:



Speak to a **community leader** to find out what help is available.

Talk to a **community health worker** if you have health problems or are caring for someone who is sick or old.



Seek help from a **trusted friend** if you are lonely and to share your problems.



Phone a **helpline** if you have trouble at home, worry too much or need advice about your condition/s. See page 34.



Contact **SASSA** if you don't have food or money and qualify for a grant.

If you have no food or money or have trouble at home, reach out to a **community organisation** that helps those in need.

If you are unwell or are struggling to cope with your condition/s, visit your **healthcare facility**.





# Medications list

The medications in this list are arranged in alphabetical order.

- Look for your medication in the medications list.
- Check on the packet/bottle for when and how often to take it.
- Read how the medication works and what side effects it might cause.
- If you have a problem that is listed as a side effect, discuss it at your next appointment or if **written in red, seek help urgently**.

Medication	Condition	How it works	Side effects
Amlodipine	Hypertension	Relaxes blood vessels, decreases blood pressure, placing less strain on heart.	Swelling of feet, tiredness, dizziness, stomach pain
Amitriptyline	Depression	Treats depression and/or anxiety	Dry mouth, difficulty urinating, blurred vision, sedation
Amoxicillin	COPD	Treats lung infections.	Nausea, diarrhoea, <b>skin rash</b>
Aspirin	Hypertension, diabetes	Thins the blood to prevent a stroke or heart attack.	Stomach pain or bleeding, avoid in asthma
Beclomethasone inhaler (controller)	Asthma	Helps prevent a tight chest. Use even if chest is not tight.	Sore mouth – rinse after use to prevent it.
Budesonide nasal spray	Asthma	Prevents hayfever – itchy, runny nose.	Uncommon
Budesonide inhaler (controller)	Asthma	Helps prevent a tight chest. Use even if chest is not tight.	Sore mouth – rinse mouth after use to prevent it.
Carbamazepine	Epilepsy	Prevents fits.	Nausea, dizziness, drowsiness, <b>unsteady on feet, blurred/double vision</b>
Citalopram	Depression/ anxiety	Treats depression and/or anxiety	Drowsiness, headache, nausea, sweating, altered appetite, dry mouth

Medication	Condition	How it works	Side effects
Co-trimoxazole	HIV	Helps protect against some infections when the immune system is weak.	Nausea, <b>skin rash, yellow skin and eyes</b>
Dolutegravir	HIV	Lowers HIV level. May have harmful effect on fetus if taken in the first 6 weeks of pregnancy.	Headache, nausea, diarrhoea, difficulty sleeping (take in morning)
Doxycycline	COPD	Treats lung infections.	Take with lots of water to prevent heartburn.
Enalapril	Hypertension, diabetes	Prevents tightening of blood vessels, which decreases the blood pressure and protects the kidneys.	<b>Swelling of tongue, lips or face, difficulty breathing</b> , dizziness on standing up, dry cough
Fluconazole	HIV	Kills and protects against germs that occur in AIDS.	Nausea, <b>yellow skin and eyes</b>
Fluoxetine	Depression/ anxiety	Treats depression and/or anxiety	Changes in appetite and weight, headache, restlessness, difficulty sleeping, nausea, diarrhoea, sexual problems
Fluticasone inhaler (controller)	Asthma	Helps prevent a tight chest. Use even if chest is not tight.	Sore mouth – rinse after use to prevent it.
Glibenclamide (take 30 minutes before meals)	Diabetes	Lowers the sugar in the blood	Irritable, tired, sweaty, shaky or confused – eat sugary food/drink, <b>if no better, seek help.</b>
Glimepiride (Take with breakfast)	Diabetes	Lowers the sugar in the blood.	Irritable, tired, sweaty, shaky or confused – eat sugary food/drink, <b>if no better, seek help.</b>

Medication	Condition	How it works	Side effects
Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)	Hypertension	Helps the kidneys get rid of excess salts and water, thus decreasing the blood pressure.	Headache, nausea, swollen painful joint/s
Ibuprofen	Pain	Treats pain associated with inflammation or swelling, as well as fever.	Stomach problems; if taken for a long time, kidney or heart disease.
Insulin	Diabetes	Lowers the sugar in the blood.	Irritable, tired, sweaty, shaky or confused – eat sugary food/drink, <b>if no better, seek help.</b>
Isoniazid (INH)	HIV	Helps prevent TB.	Pain/numbness of feet, <b>yellow skin and eyes, skin rash</b>
Lamotrigine	Epilepsy	Prevents fits	<b>Skin rash</b> , nausea, difficulty sleeping, blurred vision, drowsiness
Metformin	Diabetes	Lowers the sugar in the blood.	Nausea, diarrhoea, stomach pain
Paracetamol	Arthritis and other pain conditions	Treats pain and fever.	Uncommon. If taken regularly for more than a few months, it can cause headaches.
Phenytoin	Epilepsy	Prevents fits.	Drowsiness, large gums, <b>skin rash, unsteady on feet, blurred/double vision</b>
Prednisone	Asthma, COPD	Helps to open the chest.	Problems sleeping, mood changes
Pyridoxine – vitamin B6	TB	Protects from nerve damage in the legs caused by isoniazid.	Uncommon
Rifafour e-275® (rifampicin, isoniazid, pyrazinamide, ethambutol)	TB	Combination of four medications that work in different ways to kill TB germs (includes isoniazid).	Orange urine, nausea, pain/numbness of feet, joint pain, <b>skin rash, yellow skin and eyes</b>

Medication	Condition	How it works	Side effects
Rifinah® (rifampicin, isoniazid)	TB	Combination of two medications that work in different ways to kill TB germs (includes isoniazid).	Orange urine, nausea, pain/numbness of feet, <b>skin rash, yellow skin and eyes</b>
Salbutamol inhaler (reliever)	Asthma, COPD	Helps to open the chest. Use when chest is tight.	Tremor, anxiety, headache
Salmeterol/ fluticasone inhaler (preventer)	Asthma, COPD	Helps prevent a tight chest. Use even if chest is not tight.	Headache, sore mouth – rinse mouth after use to prevent it.
Simvastatin	Hypertension, diabetes	Lowers cholesterol in the blood to prevent heart attacks, strokes.	Stomach pain, constipation, nausea
Sodium valproate	Epilepsy	Prevents fits.	Nausea, vomiting, indigestion, weight gain, <b>yellow skin and eyes</b>
Tenofovir/ emtricitabine/ efavirenz	HIV	Three medications in one tablet work together to lower HIV level in the body.	Headache, nausea, dizziness, sleep problems – should pass in 6 weeks. <b>Skin rash, yellow skin and eyes.</b>
Tenofovir/ lamivudine/ dolutegravir	HIV	Three medications in one tablet work together to lower HIV level in the body. May have harmful effect on fetus if taken in the first 6 weeks of pregnancy.	Headache, nausea, diarrhoea, difficulty sleeping (take in morning)

# Helplines and websites

## Coronavirus – COVID-19

National Coronavirus (COVID-19) General Public Hotline	Latest information on coronavirus (COVID-19)	0800 029 999 WhatsApp 'Hi' to 0600 123 456
Western Cape Government Call Centre	For COVID-19 health-related concerns	0860 142 142
National EVDS Self-Registration App	To register to be vaccinated against COVID-19	<a href="https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za">https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za</a>

## Getting help

Food Parcel Service – Western Cape	Food parcels for those who qualify for assistance	021 469 0235
Legal Aid Advice Line	Information and guidance on any legal matter	0800 110 110 (07:00–19:00 Monday to Friday)
Medic Alert	Assistance with application for Medic Alert disc or bracelet	021 425 7328 (09:00–16:00) 021 461 0000 (24-hour emergency line)
SASSA	For information about social grants	0800 60 10 11 (toll free) GrantEnquiries@sassa.gov.za 021 469 0200 GrantsEnquiriesWC@sassa.gov.za

## Chronic conditions

Diabetes South Africa	Information, eating advice and support workshops	WhatsApp: 081 578 6636
Epilepsy South Africa	Information, counselling and support groups	0860 37 45 37 (08:00–16:30 Monday to Thursday, 08:00–14:00 Friday)
Heart and Stroke Foundation	Information and support groups if you have had a stroke or suffer from any heart condition	021 422 1586 (08:00–16:00)
National AIDS Helpline	Counselling and information if you have HIV or are thinking of having an HIV test	0800 012 322 (24 hours)
People living with Cancer	Cancer-related queries and support	0800 033 337
Arthritis Foundation of South Africa	Information, education and support groups for those with arthritis	0861 30 30 30

## Counselling and crisis support

Lifeline National Counselling Line	Counselling for any life crisis and referral to support services	0861 322 322 (24 hours) 065 989 9238 (WhatsApp call counselling)
Childline SA (ages 0–16 years)	For children and young adolescents who are in crises, are being abused or at risk of abuse and violence	0800 055 555 (24 hours)
Gender-Based Violence Command Centre	Assistance if experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault or abuse	0800 428 428 *120*7867# from any cell phone
National Shelter Movement SA (NSMSA)	A helpline for victims of abuse or domestic violence to call and speak to a social worker	0800 001 005 (24 hours; tollfree)
TEARS Foundation	SMS helpline in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault and child sexual abuse	*134*7355# www.tears.co.za
National Human Trafficking Helpline	Reporting human trafficking	0800 222 777
Rape Crisis	Counselling and court support for rape survivors over 13 years of age	021 447 9762 (24 hours): English 021 361 9085: Xhosa 021 633 9229: Afrikaans WhatsApp line: 083 222 5164
MobieG	Live-chat counselling for teens	www.mobieg.co.za (Sunday from 18:00, Monday–Thursday from 19:00)
Safeline	Abuse counselling and court preparation	0800 035 553 (24 hours)
South African Police Services	Report a crime	08600 10111
Child Welfare South Africa	Report child abuse or neglect	0861 452 4110
Police Child Protection Unit	Report child abuse or neglect	10111 childprotect@saps.org.za
Family and Marriage Association of South Africa (FAMSA)	Support and education during stressful times	011 975 7106/7 national@famsa.org.za

## Alcohol, drugs and smoking

Alcoholics Anonymous	Counselling, education and support groups if you require assistance with alcohol abuse	0861 435 722 (09:30–17:00 Monday to Thursday, 09:30–15:00, Friday)
SA National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	Support and help for people addicted to drugs and alcohol, as well as their families	0800 456 789 SMS 31393
Narcotics Anonymous (NA)	Information and support for drug addicts	0861 006 962
National Council Against Smoking Quitline	Information and support to stop smoking	011 720 3145 082 840 3548

## Mental health

South African Depression and Anxiety Group	Counselling and support if you have depression or anxiety	0800 456 789 SMS 31393
Suicide Crisis Line	For any suicide-related support	0800 567 567 (08:00–20:00) or SMS 31393 and a counsellor will call back
Cape Mental Health	Counselling, support, rehabilitation, training and re-integration programmes	021 447 9040 (08:00–16:30 Monday to Friday)
Mental Health Helpline	Counselling and support if you have a mental illness	0800 12 13 14 (24 hours) SMS 31393 and a counsellor will call back
CIPLA 24-hour Mental Health Helpline	Helpline for mental disorders, anxiety, depression and suicide	0800 456 789 WhatsApp line: 076 88 22 77 5
Dementia SA	For support, awareness, training and information on dementia	0860 636 679 (24 hours) 021 421 0078 <a href="http://www.dementiasa.org">www.dementiasa.org</a>



Western Cape  
Government

Health



PACK  
Practical Approach to Care Kit

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# Practical Approach to Care Kit