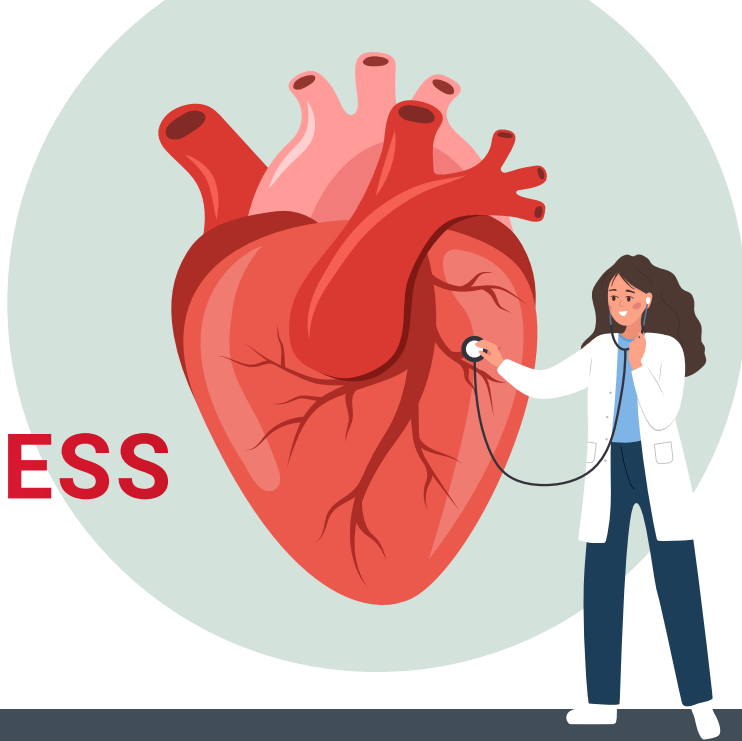


SEPTEMBER IS HEART AWARENESS MONTH

Know your risk, protect your heart



Heart Awareness Month, observed every September and leading up to World Heart Day on 29 September, aims to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease (CVD) - the leading cause of death worldwide, and second only to HIV/AIDS in South Africa. CVD is responsible for almost 1 in 6 deaths in South Africa, with around 225 South Africans dying from heart disease and stroke every day.

The good news is that up to 80% of heart disease and stroke can be prevented through healthy habits and by managing key risk factors early. This month is a reminder to check in on your heart health, even if you feel fine.

YOU ARE MORE AT RISK FOR HEART DISEASE IF YOU:



Have high blood pressure and high cholesterol



Have diabetes or are insulin resistant



Are overweight or obese



Smoke and drink excessive alcohol



Are physically inactive



Have a family history of heart disease



Suffer from chronic stress

Some risk factors, like age and family history, can't be changed. But most of the factors above can be managed or improved - which is why early awareness matters.

SIGNS TO WATCH OUT FOR

- Chest pain, pressure or tightness
- Shortness of breath, even with light activity
- Pain spreading to the arm, jaw, neck or back
- Unusual fatigue
- Dizziness, light-headedness or heart palpitations
- Swelling in the legs, ankles or feet

Women often experience different symptoms to men, such as nausea, back pain or extreme tiredness – so it's important not to ignore subtle signs.



If you experience sudden or severe chest pain, shortness of breath or symptoms of a possible heart attack, seek emergency medical care immediately.

HOW YOU CAN CARE FOR YOUR HEART



DIET:

Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables and whole grains, choose healthy fats over saturated and trans fats, limit salt and added sugar and include oily fish where possible.



LIFESTYLE:

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week, don't smoke, limit alcohol, manage stress and get 6 - 8 hours of sleep a night.



MONITOR YOUR KEY HEALTH INDICATORS:

Blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood sugar, and body mass index (BMI) or waist circumference.

HOW CAN AECI MEDICAL AID SOCIETY HELP YOU AND YOUR HEART?

Heart disease often develops silently, with no noticeable symptoms until a serious event occurs. Regular screening helps detect high blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and other risk factors early - allowing for lifestyle changes or medical treatment before damage is done.

- The Scheme's Preventative Benefits include one **Health Risk Assessment (HRA)** per beneficiary per year. The HRA includes a behavioural change readiness component and provides you with an immediate view of your cardiovascular risk, your lifestyle risk factors as well as mental health status. Screening tests include blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and BMI. An HRA can be performed by a registered nurse at a contracted Pharmacy or at a Scheme wellness event.
- One lipogram (cholesterol) test per beneficiary from age 20 is also covered by the Preventative Benefits.
Claims for these benefits are paid from a separate benefit and will not affect your day-to-day benefits (although further treatment, if needed, will be subject to your other applicable benefit limits). Take advantage of these important benefits to assess your health and identify any risk factors early.
- **Type 1 & 2 Diabetes** are chronic PMB conditions covered by the Scheme, subject to authorisation and the Chronic Medicine Management Clinical guidelines.
- The Scheme also offers a **Weight Management programme** (subject to clinical criteria) and the **GoSmokeFree programme** (R3 000 per beneficiary). Read more on page 28 of your Member Guide.

A healthy heart starts with knowing your numbers. If you haven't had your blood pressure, cholesterol or blood sugar checked recently, book a screening today.



Contact your Scheme: ☎ 0860 002 103 | @aecisociety@medscheme.co.za
or scan the QR Code to visit the AECI MAS Member Portal | ➡ aecimedicalaidsociety.co.za