

## DEAR MEMBER

A very warm welcome back to all our valued members. We trust you had a peaceful holiday season and spent quality time with your loved ones. To get the year started, Issue 1 focuses on practical ways to achieve resolutions related to health, tips on stretching your medical scheme benefits to last longer and lastly the Silent Killer – Hypertension, as we encourage you to take care of your heart this Valentine's Day by knowing your blood pressure reading.

We welcome any suggestions for articles or member benefits you would like to see in future newsletters. Please send your suggestions to the team at the Scheme office by email to [news@mhcmf.org.za](mailto:news@mhcmf.org.za). Here's to another successful year looking after your health.



## WHAT'S NEW?

### NEW YEAR. NEW LOOK.

Get in touch with us on our digital platform.

We invite you to take a moment to visit our new and improved MHC website on [www.mhcmf.co.za](http://www.mhcmf.co.za). The website provides a more engaging user experience and enhanced navigation to help visitors easily find the information they require.

We would also like to encourage you to download our MHC Mobile App, if you haven't already done so. The new app will enable members to easily resolve their claims queries, and provide them with useful information on their benefits and other services - anytime, anywhere. Members can download the free app with their smartphone or feature phone from Google Play or the App Store. Visit [www.mhcmf.co.za](http://www.mhcmf.co.za) for more information.

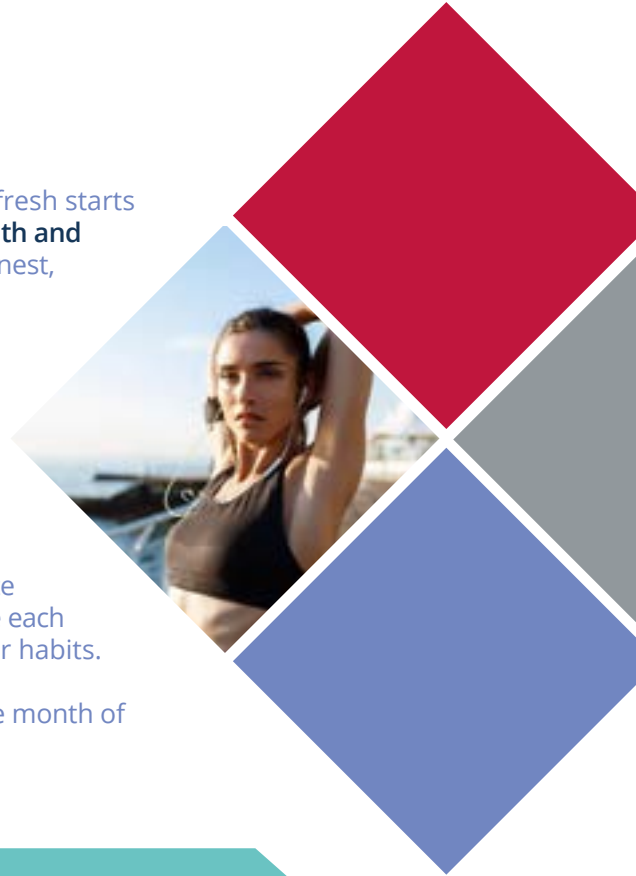


## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR A HAPPY - AND HEALTHY 2019

The new year can be an exciting time, brimming with the promise of fresh starts and new beginnings. **It's also an opportunity to recommit to your health and well-being.** Instead of declaring a sweeping resolution that- let's be honest, you'll probably forget about in February- making micro monthly goals can be more effective.

Attempting to improve your health is much easier when you take small steps towards wellness; - one step at a time, one bite at a time. Jumping in too quickly often results in disappointing progress or, worse, an injury because you are hoping for a quick fix or striving for an unattainable goal. To make a true commitment to your health and transform your lifestyle in a long-term, meaningful way, try manageable tweaks. Starting today, set small, easy-to-complete goals for yourself, and over time you'll see how you can add a little more each day to get to where you want to be. Eventually these will become your habits.

Creating these resolutions is easy enough. Sticking to them beyond the month of January, however, is another story.



### TIPS TO HELP YOU MAKE - AND KEEP - YOUR HEALTHY RESOLUTIONS FOR 2019

Practise mindful eating by establishing a healthier relationship with food, and eat more home-cooked meals. Because our metabolism is faster in the morning, aim to have your biggest meal for breakfast and a light meal for dinner, making sure you have 10 hours without food overnight.

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Getting the appropriate amount of exercise benefits nearly all aspects of a person's health. Not only does exercise help control weight, it also improves mental health, mood, chances of living longer, and the strength of your bones and muscles.

Adopt an attitude of gratitude, and make a conscious habit to express appreciation for an amazing life. A grateful heart keeps us focused on the bigger picture so that, when adversity strikes, we don't lose ourselves in the process.

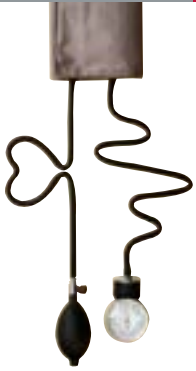
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Set aside 20 minutes a day to meditate. Science has proven that setting aside time to meditate on a daily basis helps to de-stress, improve concentration, encourage a healthy lifestyle, increase happiness and, if nothing else, get you off your phone for a little bit!

What is your space saying about you — and what is it doing to your energy, mood and outlook on life? It's time for a makeover-, so schedule a decluttering weekend. Get rid of clutter in your office and home, - and donate, toss or delete unwanted items.

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## HYPERTENSION: THE SILENT KILLER

Hypertension often has no warning signs or symptoms and many sufferers do not even know they have it. **High blood pressure**, medically known as hypertension, is a major risk factor for heart disease, strokes, kidney disease and even eye diseases. When blood pressure exceeds a certain threshold, we call it high blood pressure.

### WHAT IS HYPERTENSION?

Hypertension, is a condition where too much pressure is placed on the walls of the arteries. With increased pressure, the heart has to work harder to pump an adequate amount of blood to the body, causing serious damage to the walls of the arteries.

**So, why should you be worried about hypertension?** Over time, uncontrolled hypertension increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, dementia, and kidney failure.



### HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS:

You may be able to cure hypertension with lifestyle changes alone!



### KNOW YOUR READING

The World Hypertension League recommends that everyone should get their blood pressure checked at least once a year:

If your **blood pressure is below 120/80** (meaning less than 120 mmHg of systolic blood pressure and less than 80 mmHg of diastolic blood pressure) then you have normal, **healthy blood pressure**. Congratulations – keep it like that and get your blood pressure checked in a year's time.

If your blood pressure is **less than 140/90 but above 120/80, you are at risk of becoming hypertensive**. You need to take some immediate steps to improve your lifestyle, such as quitting smoking if you are a smoker; reducing your body weight to a healthy level; becoming more active; improving your dietary habits to include more vegetables and fruits; reducing salt intake; and cutting down on your fat intake. And you need to meet with a healthcare professional to reassess your blood-pressure status every year.

If your blood pressure is above 140/90, you need to see a healthcare professional to assess if you have hypertension and require treatment to help to avoid heart disease and stroke.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT HYPERTENSION?

**Maintain a healthy body weight.** Losing even 2 or 3 kilograms can lower your blood pressure.

**Get regular exercise.**

**Quit smoking.** Tobacco injures blood vessel walls and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries.

**Eat healthy foods.** Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy foods. Foods rich in potassium will help to control your blood pressure. Eat less saturated fat, and add foods rich in nitrates to your diet, such as beetroot, fennel and lettuce.

**Reduce your LDL (bad cholesterol)** by avoiding processed foods.

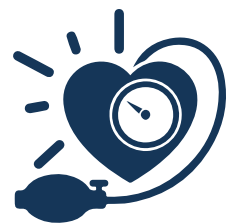
**Limit your salt intake.** Pay attention to the amount of salt in processed foods.

**Limit your daily intake of alcohol.**

**Manage your stress levels.** Practise coping techniques, such as muscle relaxing and deep breathing.

### DID YOU KNOW?

MHC covers hypertension under the Chronic Illness Benefit upon registration onto the care programme. Please call 0861000300 for more info.



### SPREAD YOUR MEDICAL SCHEME BENEFITS EVENLY

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MEDICAL SCHEME BENEFITS LAST

**Contact your medical scheme** and ask who the designated service provider (DSP) is for the service or product that you need.

If you need to undergo an operation, **ask your surgeon for the codes that will be charged.** This will include the procedure codes and codes for any other products that are needed, such as an internal prosthesis that will be used.

**Discuss the medical scheme tariff** with your surgeon and negotiate the price that you will pay.

Contact your medical scheme and **ask whether the specific type of product will be funded in full.** If not, make sure that you know what portion of the cost will be for your own pocket.

Ask your scheme to **provide you with a list of DSPs** if applicable to your plan. The scheme may appoint health care professionals and hospital groups as designated service providers. These providers usually have agreements with the schemes for non-prescribed minimum benefits as well.

**Determine if there is a shortfall** and make plans to fund it.

**Obtain pre-authorisation for procedures/treatment** as provided for in the rules of your medical scheme.

