



NURTURING MIND AND BODY

IS KEY TO LONG-TERM WELLNESS

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In a world where our lives are becoming increasingly fast-paced and interconnected, holistic health and wellness have never been more crucial. It's an approach to health and wellbeing which considers an individual's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing that blends the modern with the traditional.

Incorporating physical exercise into our daily routines is an essential component of holistic health. Kevin Aron, principal officer at Medshield Medical Scheme, points out that engaging in any kind of physical activity, irrespective of whether it is walking, jogging, cycling, dancing or an exercise class, not only helps to maintain a healthy weight, but also improves your mood, cardiovascular health and enhances your overall fitness. "Choose an exercise programme that aligns with your body type and health objectives – and remember that consistency is key," he says.

One in three South Africans suffers from mental health issues, with the majority unable to access appropriate treatment. In fact, common and treatable mental health disorders have overtaken physical illnesses and injuries as the leading cause of medical disability claims in South Africa. For its part, Medshield Medical Scheme is stepping up and offering their members access to mental health services, and providing them with information on how to manage their mental health.

Elevated levels of stress can have a negative impact on the cardiovascular system. The good news, however, is that improving your diet and doing more exercise can mitigate these negative impacts.

Mindful activities such as yoga, tai chi

and meditation also help to reduce stress and improve physical and mental wellbeing.

In our fast-paced lives, it's all too easy to prioritise convenience over nutritious meal choices. According to Aron, a holistic approach to healthy eating goes beyond strict diets or quick weight-loss methods, and is about finding a balance and making lifestyle changes that support your overall wellbeing. "Adopting a healthy diet positively impacts energy levels, mental wellbeing and your overall health."

A big trend now is personalised nutrition, which takes an individual's genetic, phenotypic, medical, nutritional and other information into consideration.

"Personalised nutrition can be very helpful in managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. It often involves more advanced technology and focuses on personalised recommendations based on an individual's unique genetic makeup, lifestyle habits and other factors," says Aron.

He advises consulting a healthcare professional such as a dietitian to guide you on your needs and help you navigate the journey of conscious eating, ensuring you make informed nutritional choices.

"At Medshield, we have partnered with nutritionists and dietitians to craft delectable recipes that empower our members to make informed dietary choices, improving their overall health and reducing the risk of chronic conditions," he says.

Holistic health embraces alternative therapies such as acupuncture, herbal medicine and aromatherapy. "There is no question that integrating complementary treatments with conventional medical



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thinking has benefits," says Aron. "Natural immune boosters, for example, have a role to play in fighting winter germs and helping to prevent a cold before it starts."

Health technologies of the future

The rise of wearable health technology, combined with the promotion of preventive screening and remote health monitoring, offers a futuristic wellness vision. It's a vision, says Aron, which allows individuals to track their progress, receive real-time health insights and enjoy the peace of mind that comes with having medical assistance just a call away.

Medical aid schemes are increasingly embracing a more personalised and holistic approach to their wellness programmes. Medshield Movement, as one example, is a wellness portal offered by Medshield Medical Scheme.

Aron explains that the site is designed to help members improve their overall health and wellbeing through various exercise and diet offerings, such as fitness classes, nutrition coaching, healthy recipes that have been developed in partnership with nutritionists and dietitians, mental health support and wellness assessments. The Elevate portal, part of the Medshield loyalty programme, focuses on technology and data-driven wellness solutions.

"Members can use their wearable devices, such as smartwatches or fitness trackers, to track their activity levels, heart rate and other health metrics. The data is then integrated into the Elevate platform to provide personalised feedback and goals, coaching and rewards to encourage healthy behaviour," Aron says.

A holistic approach to health and wellness is about listening to your mind and body to find balance, he adds.