



Welcome to the first LA Health newsletter

2024

A warm welcome to new LA Health members

We have many new members who have joined LA Health, the scheme of choice for local government employees. We'd like to welcome these members - we hope your journey with us will be a positive and healthy one.


Please note that we no longer send membership cards to members via post, as the postal system is not always reliable. Members can now access their digital membership cards on the app. Download the Discovery app to activate your digital membership card and save it to your mobile device for easy access. You can request a plastic card by contacting your broker or the contact centre at any time. You'll also be able to view all your benefits, limits and more on the app.

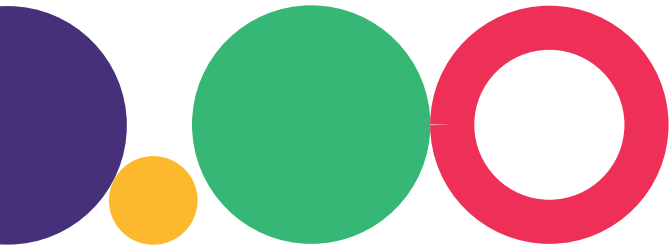
If you have trouble using the app or if you need to contact us at any time, here are our contact details:

- **Call centre:** 0860 103 933
- **Email address for general queries:** service@lahealthms.co.za
- **Email address for claims:** claims@lahealthms.co.za

Some members changed their benefit options at the end of 2023. If you have changed options you need to confirm your cover for chronic conditions and medicine - according to your option's medicine list (formulary) - with your healthcare practitioners. Please note that the formulary is subject to change during the course of the year, due to many factors.

We'd like to remind all members to make sure your contact details are always updated for our records. Please note that we cannot email to work addresses ending in .gov. Please provide a private email address to make sure you don't miss out on important communication.





LA Health Board of Trustees elections: Let your voice be heard

The LA Health Board of Trustees is responsible for managing the affairs of the Scheme and ensuring good governance. By electing the right candidates, you can ensure that your contributions are being used to provide the best possible benefits.

The Scheme belongs to you, the members, so it is important for you to participate in the trustee elections and vote for candidates who are honest, reliable and capable of managing the affairs of the Scheme. Electing the wrong person can cost members in the long run. Poor management/governance of the Scheme could easily result in fewer benefits for higher contributions.

LUMI has been appointed as an Independent Electoral Body to facilitate the election process and will continue to communicate all information about the LA Health Board of Trustees elections. LUMI's transparent electronic voting system makes sure that every member's vote counts. Voting will be open from 23 April to 24 May 2024 on the LUMI platform.

We encourage you to use the election of trustees as an opportunity to have your voice heard.

Challenge yourself to improve your health in 2024

Living a healthy lifestyle can help prevent physical and mental illness or manage illnesses effectively. In 2024, we challenge you to reflect on your lifestyle and see what you can do to live more healthily. Here are some tips to help you get started:



GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Sleep is one of the most important elements for good health. It affects everything from your mood to your appetite, your concentration, and your physical strength. Adults should aim for seven to nine hours of sleep every night.

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the practice of being present in the moment and paying attention to your thoughts and feelings without judgement. It can help reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing. Mindfulness can be developed using various tools such as meditation, exercises like walking in nature, yoga, and breathing. To introduce mindfulness into your daily life, start by setting a daily routine. Like any exercise, mindfulness improves with regular practice. Decide on an uninterrupted time of day that you can practice mindfulness and keep that time in your schedule. First thing in the morning or last thing at night for five minutes, can have huge benefits. Or it can be as simple as a quick minute in your busy day to stop, take a breath, take stock of what's going on inside – how you feel – and then you can get on with your day again. Start small and you can work your way up to longer sessions or meditation.



KEEP YOUR MIND AND BODY FIT

Regular exercise can help improve your physical and mental health. Try to do at least 15 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week. That could be as simple as a walk with your family after dinner.

EAT A HEALTHY DIET

A healthy diet can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Aim to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins such as chicken and fish, and healthy fats. Most importantly, cut back on alcohol, fizzy drinks, sugar and refined foods such as chips, biscuits, cakes, white breads and pastas and fast foods. Start small by eliminating one thing and, once you see the results, it will be easy to cut out more.

TAKE SMALL MANAGEABLE STEPS

Introducing good habits can be challenging, but taking small steps can make it easier. Start by setting achievable goals, such as drinking water instead of fizzy drinks or walking three times a week, and gradually increase the difficulty to that gym class or doing a Parkrun.

GO FOR REGULAR SCREENING TESTS

Prevention or early detection of a chronic condition, and early lifestyle changes can prevent the need for chronic medicine and hospital stays. This can result in a longer, healthier and more active life. As an LA Health member, we encourage you to take advantage of the screening benefits available to you and have your regular health screenings. These benefits are paid from Risk and won't use up your day-to-day benefits. Visit the **LA Health website** or contact us on **0860 103 933** to find out more about the benefits available to you.



Remember, healthy living is a choice that can have life-saving consequences. Take that first step and introduce one good habit that will help you live a healthier life.





TB: the silent threat lurking in your lungs

Tuberculosis (TB) is still one of the world's most deadly infectious diseases, and South Africa is among the countries with the highest TB diagnoses. According to Stats SA's June 2021 report, TB was the leading cause of death in the three years from 2016 to 2018. It is important to be aware of the symptoms and risk factors of TB – the condition can be prevented and is treatable if detected early. Here are some key facts to keep in mind:

- There is no shame in being diagnosed with TB.
- Even though TB is treatable, in 2022, 280 000 people in South Africa fell ill with TB and 27 450 died from the disease (according to new World Health Organization data).
- Men are more likely to contract TB and die from it, due to several factors including alcohol consumption and tobacco use.
- Symptoms of TB include a persistent cough (lasting for more than two weeks), coughing up blood or sputum, fever for more than two weeks, pain in the chest, weight loss, night sweats, and loss of appetite.
- You must seek medical advice if you or someone you know has these symptoms.



Remember, early diagnosis and treatment is necessary to keep your symptoms manageable and to control the spread of the infection to your friends and loved ones.





Basic tips on reducing salt and sugar intake

Diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) are on the rise among LA Health members and South Africa at large. Research shows that high sugar and salt consumption are linked to obesity (which is linked to diabetes) and hypertension. This is not only the actual raw salt and sugar we add to our food and drinks, but also processed foods and beverages, which are high in salt and sugar. Reducing salt and sugar intake can be challenging, but it is extremely important for maintaining good health. Here are some tips to help you cut back on salt and sugar:

READ FOOD LABELS

Check the nutrition label on packaged foods to see how much salt and sugar they contain. Choose products with lower amounts of salt and sugar.

COOK AT HOME

Preparing your meals at home allows you to control the amount of salt and sugar in your food. Use herbs and spices to add flavour instead of salt and try using natural sweeteners like honey or apple puree instead of sugar.

AVOID PROCESSED FOODS

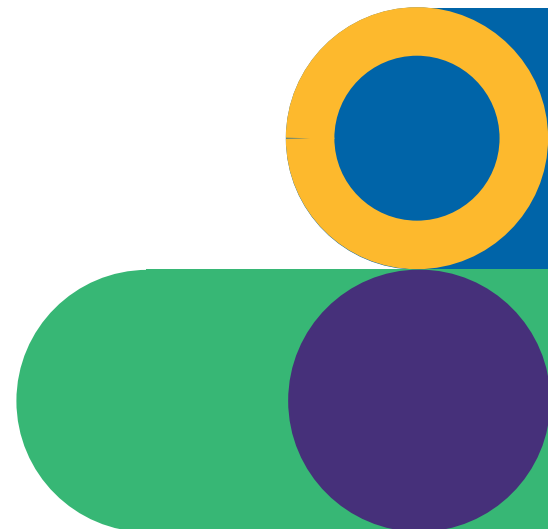
Processed foods such as ready-meals, chips, snacks and fast-foods are often high in salt and sugar. Try to eat fresh, whole foods like fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins like chicken and fish instead.

DRINK MORE WATER

Sugary drinks like fizzy cold drinks and juice are a major source of added sugar in many people's diets. Just one fizzy drink can contain nine teaspoons of sugar! Drinking water instead of sugary drinks is a very good way to help reduce your sugar intake.

WATCH YOUR PORTION SIZES

Eating too much of any food, even healthy foods, can lead to weight gain and other health problems. Keep an eye on portion sizes and try to eat slowly to give your body time to feel full.



The importance of screening tests

Sometimes a person can look perfectly healthy on the outside but may have some worrying health problems happening on the inside, that they might not even be aware of. Most of these are easy to treat, but it's important that you know your health status, to get the right support and treatment if you need it.

The only way to keep a check on your health is to have regular health screenings. Detecting diseases early helps prevent severe illness and avoids expensive and debilitating bills.

LA Health offers you many important preventative health screenings and these are covered as part of your benefits, so you don't have to use your savings (if you have a Medical Savings Account on your benefit option). These tests can help identify potential health problems before they become serious and can even save lives. Regular screening tests

can help uncover diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. It is important to have your screening tests done regularly so that any medical conditions you may have can be detected early, to ensure the best treatment outcomes for you.

You can find our wellness and preventative screening tests, in our **Wellness Toolkit**.

We know that screening can be scary, but finding out about a problem early can sometimes even save a life. Start the year off in the best way possible for your health and wellbeing, by taking the right action. Book all your health screenings and take the first step to improving your health.





We're in it for
your health

● CLIENT SERVICES 0860 103 933 ● FAX 011 539 7276 ● WWW.LAHEALTH.CO.ZA ● SERVICE@LAHEALTHMS.CO.ZA ● REPORT FRAUD ANONYMOUSLY 0800 004 500

 LA-Health  LA Health

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