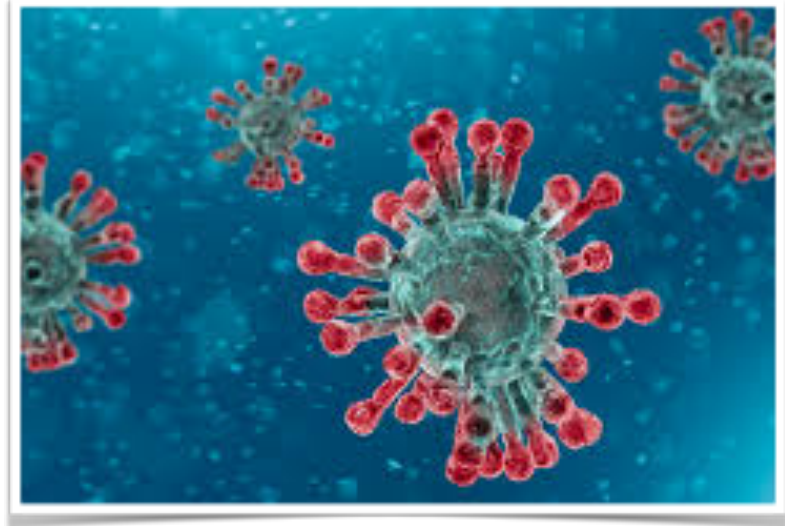


COVID-19



# Health Focus

"Stigma, to be honest, is more dangerous than the virus itself. Let's really underline that. Stigma is the most dangerous enemy."

- WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the crisis a public health emergency and eventually designated it a pandemic.

A new coronavirus that originated in China has spread around the globe, prompting countries to impose strict measures to stop local outbreaks and prevent further economic turmoil. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the crisis a public health emergency and eventually designated it a pandemic.

In South Africa we have witnessed aggressive shopping, leaving many store shelves empty and the public panic stricken, fearing the worst to come. We also witnessed stock markets plummeting, causing havoc and desperate stock sales. Big events are being cancelled daily, eliminating desperate income and job opportunities.

Let us in particular remember our Health Professionals during these demanding times, having to attend to the needs of patients. There are also numerous safety and prevention factors which we can adhere to in order to stop the virus from spreading:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 15-20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Standard household cleansers and wipes are effective in cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting vaccinated, taking everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.

There is a video available on the internet in which Dr Peter Landless, Director Health Ministries GC, is interviewed regarding COVID-19. You can simply click on the following link to avail yourself of important preventative measures. Please share the link with family and friends.

[https://video.fdur2-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t39.24I30-2/I0000000\\_I9373II5254373\\_7853752420268786I3I\\_n.mp4?\\_nc\\_cat=III&\\_nc\\_sid=985c63&efg=eyJ2ZW5jb2RlX3RhZyI6Im9lcF9oZCJ9&\\_nc\\_ohc=Ni99mmpNbaYAX-laSH&\\_nc\\_ht=video.fdur2-1.fna&oh=6759cc56831e89fcdbo3e643f64a7126&oe=5E9657CD](https://video.fdur2-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t39.24I30-2/I0000000_I9373II5254373_7853752420268786I3I_n.mp4?_nc_cat=III&_nc_sid=985c63&efg=eyJ2ZW5jb2RlX3RhZyI6Im9lcF9oZCJ9&_nc_ohc=Ni99mmpNbaYAX-laSH&_nc_ht=video.fdur2-1.fna&oh=6759cc56831e89fcdbo3e643f64a7126&oe=5E9657CD)

**A word of advice: It's better to plan and be productive than to panic!**

## LATEST BREAKING NEWS UPDATES



A team of Australian researchers say they've found a cure for the novel coronavirus and hope to have patients enrolled in a nationwide trial by the end of the month.

University of Queensland Centre for Clinical Research director Professor David Paterson told news.com.au today they have seen two drugs used to treat other conditions wipe out the virus in test tubes.

He said one of the medications, given to some of the first people to test positive for COVID-19 in Australia, had already resulted in "disappearance of the virus" and complete recovery from the infection.

Prof Paterson, who is also an infectious disease physician at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, said it wasn't a stretch to label the drugs "a treatment or a cure".

"It's a potentially effective treatment," he said.

"Patients would end up with no viable coronavirus in their system at all after the end of therapy."

The drugs are both already registered and available in Australia.

- [news.com.au](https://www.news.com.au)

# How High Blood Sugar Breaks Down The Immune System

Very few people know just how crucial good blood sugar levels are for a healthy immune system.

And there has never been a better time to make sure our immune systems are working at their best.



The fact of the matter is that if we do not manage our blood sugar levels properly, it can seriously damage our immune system which opens us up to all kinds of viruses and diseases.

At times like these, our top priority should be to keep our immune systems as strong as possible – not buying toilet paper.

## But how do high blood sugar levels damage the immune system?

White blood cells are the antibodies our body uses to fight infection and illness. But when there is too much glucose in the bloodstream (high blood sugar levels) the white blood cells do not work nearly as effectively as they should. When the white blood cells are working ineffectively, the immune system becomes weak and the body cannot protect itself against viruses or other diseases, and cannot heal itself properly when sick.

## How do I know if my blood sugar levels are high?

Some common signs of high blood sugar levels are...

- Finding it difficult to be fully alert after 20 minutes from getting out of bed.
- Feeling it is difficult to start the day without something like coffee, tea, a cigarette, or something sweet.
- Often feeling sleepy and in need of a nap during the day, especially after eating something.

- Refraining from exercise due to a lack of energy.
- Often getting headaches.
- Suffering from unexplained night sweats.
- A dry feeling in the mouth.
- Constant thirst.
- Frequent urinating.
- Blurry vision.
- Dry and irritated skin.
- Fatigue or tiredness.
- Loss of weight.
- Becoming hungry more easily.



## How can we get blood sugar levels under control and improve our immune system?

The best way to get our blood sugar levels under control is to make some simple and easy healthy lifestyle changes. Here's what we mean...

### **Eat right –**

Eating healthy and maintaining a healthy weight. Whether we are at a healthy weight or not, follow a good eating plan like the **Manna Diet**. This will make sure that you do not overdo it on foods that cause your blood sugar levels to go up, and also help you take in the needed nutrients which helps you to be healthier overall.

### **Exercise –**

Increase physical activity, even just by doing 30 minutes of exercise 4 times a week. But do not overdo it, since too much exercise can mean that the body is too busy repairing itself rather than fighting off potential viruses and diseases.

### **Hydration –**

Drink plenty of water, the rule of at least 8 glasses a day is a good and easy one to follow. Staying hydrated is a great way to help keep the blood sugar levels stable and the immune system at its peak.

## Are We Ready to Practice Lifestyle Medicine?

There is no longer any serious doubt that what each of us does in our daily lives profoundly affects our short- and long-term health and quality of life. An overwhelming body of scientific and medical literature supports this idea. But are we really utilizing this evidence to help achieve better health and quality of life for our patients and in our own lives?

Hundreds, if not thousands, of studies provide evidence that regular physical activity, maintenance of a healthy weight, not smoking cigarettes, and following sound nutritional and other health promoting practices all profoundly impact health. The strength of the literature supporting the positive effects of daily habits and actions is underscored by their incorporation in virtually every evidence-based clinical guideline addressing the prevention and treatment of metabolic diseases.

The power of daily practices, when incorporated into a positive lifestyle, has been demonstrated in multiple randomized controlled trials and cohort studies. For example, the Nurses' Health Study concluded that >80% of all heart disease and >91% of all diabetes in women could be eliminated if they would adopt a cluster of positive practices, including maintenance of a healthy body weight (body mass index of 19–25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>); regular physical activity (30 minutes or more on most days); avoiding tobacco products; following a few, simple nutritional practices, such as increasing whole grains and consuming more fruits and vegetables; and consuming 1 alcoholic beverage per day.<sup>7</sup> The US Health Professionals Study<sup>8</sup> showed similar, dramatic risk reductions in men from adopting these same lifestyle behaviors. Multiple randomized controlled trials also support the health benefits of positive lifestyle habits.

Many physicians are surprised to learn that negative lifestyle practices profoundly increase the risk of cancer. Of course, physicians recognize that cigarette smoking is the leading cause of lung and some other cancers.<sup>9</sup> However, the American Institute for Cancer Research<sup>10</sup> and the International Agency for Research on Cancer<sup>11</sup> concluded that there is sufficient evidence to link 13 human malignancies to excess body fatness. Excess body fat is the second leading cause of preventable cancer, following only cigarette smoking. An inactive lifestyle has also been linked to increased risk of cancer.

With all of these powerful examples of the profound impact of lifestyle on health, how are we in the medical community doing at helping our patients adopt positive lifestyle habits? Sadly, very poorly. Less than half of the adult population in the United States meet minimum requirements for aerobic exercise<sup>12</sup> Less than 20% of adolescents get enough physical activity to result in health benefits.<sup>13</sup> More than two-thirds of the adult population in the United States is either overweight or obese. Less than one-third of the population consumes adequate servings of fruits and vegetables and follows other simple evidence-based nutritional principles related to good health. The prevalence of diabetes has doubled in the United States in the past 20 years. More than one-third of the adult population in the United States has high blood pressure, and if the new blood pressure guidelines from the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology are widely adopted, the number reaches a staggering 46%.

How can we explain these grim statistics?



The answer is both simple and complex. The simple answer is that very few people are taking positive steps in their daily lives to lower their risks of chronic disease. In fact, when the American Heart Association published its Strategic Plan for 2020, which outlined a series of lifestyle steps to lower the likelihood of developing heart disease, only 5% of people achieved what the American Heart Association has classified as “optimal cardiovascular health.” This abysmally low finding has been replicated in numerous other studies.

But the answer is also complex. Behavior change is hard, and there are multiple factors in our daily lives that mitigate against it. Increased screen time has clearly lowered levels of physical activity and increased sedentary living. Abundant, calorie-laden food is readily available and has resulted in an increase of >450 daily calories for every man, woman, and child in the United States over the past 30 years.

What should we in the medical community be doing? Once again, the answer is both simple and complex. The simple answer is that we need to discuss positive lifestyle measures and their impact on health with every patient we see. The complex answer is that many aspects of medical practice make such discussions difficult, including time demands, lack of reimbursement, lack of knowledge and education in these areas among physicians, and perhaps most disturbing, skepticism that our patients will truly change their behavior. Unfortunately, <40% of physicians routinely counsel their patients on lifestyle issues.<sup>15</sup> This represents a squandered opportunity, because >70% of adults see a primary care physician on at least an annual basis.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, physician recommendation has been shown to be one of the most powerful predictors of behavior change. We need to launch an emphasis on the health-promoting benefits of lifestyle habits and put these habits into practice for our patients and in our daily lives.



If we are truly going to practice evidence-based medicine, we (and our country) can no longer afford to ignore the overwhelming evidence that daily habits and actions profoundly impact not only health outcomes but also cost of care.

One final plea—physician heal thyself! A distinct minority of physicians practice the components of positive lifestyle in their own lives. Yet we know that those physicians who engage in regular physical activity and follow sound nutritional principles while maintaining a healthy body weight are much more likely to counsel their patients in these areas than those who do not. Furthermore, such practices as regular physical activity may help ameliorate the increasingly worrisome problem of physician burnout.

Employing the principles of lifestyle medicine in the daily practice of medicine represents a substantial opportunity to enhance the value equation in medicine by improving outcomes for our patients and simultaneously controlling costs.<sup>19</sup> The time has come to truly practice lifestyle medicine and encourage positive lifestyle decisions for our patients and adopt them in our own lives. Our patients and our country should demand nothing less.

- James M Rippe: *The American Journal of Medicine*, Jan 2019. Article shortened.

*My sincere gratitude to Dr Dave Glass for introducing me to this article.*

**Address all correspondence to:**

Ps Hein von Hörsten  
[heinaphhs@telkomsa.net](mailto:heinaphhs@telkomsa.net)  
 0848003122