



YOUR BANKMED NEWSLETTER

MAGNIFICENT MOUSTACHES FOR MOVEMBER

The Movember Foundation has one goal, to stop men dying too young. Each November, they challenge Mo Bros (as supporters of the campaign are affectionately known) to start the month clean-shaven, and then grow and groom a moustache to raise funds and awareness for men's health, specifically prostate and testicular cancer, men's mental health and physical inactivity.

Last year Movember added the option to MOVE while sporting your whiskers. You can commit to anything from a daily brisk walk or taking the stairs instead of the lift, to surfing, cycling, swimming or anything that gets your heart rate up.

Sign up for Movember on www.movember.com and get your fellow Mo Bros and Mo Sistas (the women in your life) to sponsor and support your commitment to your face fur and your health!

EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among men in South Africa. While there are fewer cases of testicular cancer, it is the most common male cancer in men between the ages of 15 and 39. Luckily, there's a good chance of recovery if you catch cancer early. By knowing your body, what's normal for you and going for regular screenings, you can prevent cancer from sneaking up on you.

LET'S PLAY BALL

You're likely to notice changes in your testicles before a Healthcare Professional does. It's important to **examine your testicles each month for abnormalities**. If you are unsure how to do it, your Healthcare Professional can explain how to do the examination. Many lumps are harmless but be sure to visit your GP if you find one.





A PROSTATE-SPECIFIC ANTIGEN (PSA) TEST CAN DETECT PROSTATE CANCER EARLY

Screening does not lower your risk of having prostate cancer; it increases the chance that you will discover it early and improve your chances of recovery. The PSA test is a blood test. It doesn't test for cancer, it tests how high your level of PSA (an enzyme produced by your prostate gland) is. Raised PSA levels may be a sign of prostate cancer, but could also be caused by an enlarged prostate, prostatitis, or a urinary infection. **Bankmed pays for one PSA test per year for all male members that are 50 years and older (benefits for beneficiaries younger than 50 years are subject to motivation and prior approval).**

How to book

Our partner, BioFITT Wellness, provides you with at-home screening (which includes a PSA test on request), and we have partnered with RecoMed for online bookings at a Clicks, Dis-Chem or Alpha Pharm pharmacy.

How do I book my appointment for at-home screening?

You can schedule an at-home appointment using one of the methods below:



Make your appointment when one of our BioFITT Wellness consultants gives you a call during the course of the year



Call BioFITT Wellness on 021 820 4858 during office hours between 08:00 to 17:00



Book using the BioFITT Wellness dedicated WhatsApp line: 081 848 8938 (provide your name, membership number and physical address)

*Appointments must be cancelled 24 hours in advance if you are not able to honour the appointment.

How to book an appointment for in-pharmacy testing

Book online through **RecoMed** to screen at a Clicks, Alpha Pharm or Dis-Chem pharmacy.

Need help booking online? Email support@recomed.co.za.

We've got you covered

If your screening results indicate that you are at risk of an underlying condition, it is important that you visit your Healthcare Professional to confirm the results. If you are diagnosed as having a chronic condition, you will have to enrol on the appropriate Managed Care Programme to access the **Chronic Illness Benefit**.

Another exciting reason to conduct your health screenings is Balance! As a Balance member you can earn up to 30 000 points to help move you towards the ultimate goal of Diamond status when you complete your health screenings.

Click here to get activated for Balance and activate Active Rewards.

Sources

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Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSAs). *Fact sheet on the role of prostate specific antigen (PSA) screening on prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment*

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<http://afcrn.org/membership/87-ncr-sa>

NHS choices. *Prostate cancer – PSA testing*.





MENTAL WELLBEING IN MEN

Men experience significant rates of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder – just as women do. However, societal pressure around ‘expected’ male behaviour often prevents them from seeking the necessary help.

Society expects men to be strong, unshakeable pillars, always ready to shoulder the burden of everyone around them, without showing signs of emotional vulnerability. Such unrealistic and archaic ideals have enabled a culture where they suffer in silence.

The result is that men’s mental health issues often go undiagnosed or untreated, leading to escalated levels of suicide among men. The shocking fact is that South African men are about five times more likely to die by suicide than women.

According to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), 23 people commit suicide every day and hundreds attempt it. A 2009 study found that 9.8% of adult men had a depressive disorder and depression is ranked as the third highest level of disease burden among South African men aged 15 – 44.

Despite this prevalence, SADAG statistics show that nearly 60% of South Africans suffering from mental health issues do not seek help.

These alarming statistics point to an urgent need to remove the stigma attached to men’s mental health issues, to encourage open conversations and make it just as acceptable for men to express their feelings as it is for women. This change begins at home with parents teaching boys that it is okay to express and understand their emotions.

But where do you start if you’re feeling like you’re not coping as well as you should be?

1. **Seek Professional Help:** Don’t hesitate to reach out to a mental Health Professional including psychologists, psychiatrists, and counselors. (Employee Assistance Programme [EAP])
2. **Healthy Lifestyle:** A balanced diet, regular exercise, and adequate sleep can have significant impact on mental health.
3. **Stress Management:** Techniques like mindfulness, meditation, deep breathing, yoga, or tai chi have been proven to be beneficial.
4. **Stay Connected:** Spend time with supportive family and friends or join a support group where you can talk openly about your feelings.
5. **Limit Alcohol and Avoid Drugs:** These can exacerbate mental health problems and make it more difficult to recover.
6. **Personal Time:** Find a hobby or activity that you enjoy and that relaxes you, providing a break from your day-to-day stress.
7. **Learn More About Your Condition:** Understanding what you’re dealing with can help you find the best ways to cope and reduce any associated stigma.

Remember, you’re certainly not alone in your battle and, more importantly, your strength is not gauged by your ability to suffer in silence, but rather your willingness to seek help when you need it.

Bankmed encourages you to do your **Mental Wellbeing Assessment** to keep a close eye on your mental health. Should you or anyone in your family require support, you have access to our **Mental Health Programme**. For more resources or support you can also contact **SADAG**.



SELF-CARE: SECRET WEAPON FOR MEN WHO WANT TO CONQUER THE WORLD

What exactly is self-care and why is it necessary? Isn't it purely reserved for women, like visiting health spas and getting their hair done? Truth be told, these activities do form part of it and if getting a massage or a haircut makes you feel good, then you should certainly add it to your self-care list. Simply put, self-care is the act of taking time to focus on yourself to help relieve stress and promote wellbeing. It means allocating time to take care of your needs – whether physical, emotional, social, spiritual or any way that helps to improve your overall wellness.

Prioritising well-being can seem challenging for many men due to societal expectations that we should “be tough” and “man up” but becomes essential if we wish to lead a balanced, healthy life. So, what does this look like? Physically, it involves regular exercise, a balanced diet, sufficient sleep, and routine check-ups like your Bankmed **Personal Health Assessment**. Emotionally, it can mean managing stress through mindfulness or therapy. Spiritually, it can involve faith, meditation, or interactions with nature whilst social self-care involves quality time spent with friends and loved ones and engaging in social activities.

Whilst putting your needs first may seem selfish when you could be focusing on your work, family, or never-ending to-do list, choosing not to prioritise your needs often results in a spillover effect that negatively impacts on those important areas of your life. For example, skipping your workouts so you can work late ultimately impacts on your energy levels and physical health, which could affect your ability to parent, be a supportive partner and your overall mood and quality of life.

So how do you go about balancing your self-care with your obligations? Here are some tips:

1. **Prioritise and manage time:** Rushing, juggling too many things, and stretching ourselves too thin are all big contributors to our stress. Use tools like calendars, planners, or digital apps to organise your tasks and assignments. Then make sure to schedule in your personal time for relaxation as well.
2. **Set boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries between your work and personal life. Don't bring work home, if possible. Avoid checking e-mails after hours and use your days off for personal activities.
3. **Exercise regularly:** Physical exercise can help relieve stress and increase your productivity, making work tasks feel more manageable. You don't need to do a triathlon or sign up for Crossfit – start with a simple outdoors walk three or four times a week to get moving.
4. **Practice mindfulness:** Make time for meditation or mindfulness practices. This can help you remain more present in your personal life and more focused during your work hours.
5. **Use holiday time:** Taking regular breaks from work can help refresh your mind and improve your overall well-being. Planning your vacations also gives you something to look forward to.
6. **Seek support:** If you're feeling overwhelmed or lacking balance, seek the help you need, whether it's talking to a counselor or psychologist, your local pastor, or a friend. You can also do your online **Mental Wellbeing Assessment** to discover where you might need support.
7. **Foster social connections:** Engage with friends and family in your free time. Building and maintaining these relationships provides emotional support and is important for your mental wellbeing.

Remember, self-care is about doing whatever it is that helps you to maintain a balanced life. And finding balance enhances productivity, happiness, and overall emotional health. It's equally important as your professional success.





MAN UP AND SLATHER ON YOUR SUNSCREEN

Skin cancer is a widespread issue, not discriminating between race, culture, age, or gender. However, studies reveal it to be more prevalent among men. Globally, men have a 14% higher incidence of skin cancer than women. In South Africa, exposure to the often-unforgiving sun significantly contributes to this increased prevalence, with males comprising about 70% of all skin cancer diagnoses. This alarming statistic certainly highlights an urgent need for more concerted prevention efforts.

Men's increased risk of skin cancer is due in part to occupational exposure to UV radiation, with many men spending their working hours outdoors, as well as a generally lower engagement in sun protection.

Therefore, it's crucial for men to ramp up their skin protection measures. Some protective strategies include:

Daily use of a broad-spectrum sunscreen, SPF 30 or higher;

- Wearing sun-protective clothing, and
- Seeking shade during peak UV exposure hours, typically between 10:00 to 16:00

The lower survival rates from skin cancer in men could also be attributed to men often seeking medical help late. The good news is that skin cancer has a high success rate for recovery when detected early, with a five-year survival rate of 99% for localised melanoma, the most common type of skin cancer in men.

It's important to highlight the importance of regular skin checks and prioritisation of skin health among men. It's crucial to remember that skin cancer can manifest in numerous ways. Here are some common symptoms to watch out for:

1. **A new growth or sore that doesn't heal:** Skin cancer might appear as a pimple-like growth that bleeds easily, crusts over, heals and reappears.
2. **Changes to existing moles:** Noticing changes in the size, shape, colour, or texture of a mole can be a sign.
3. The development of a **rough or scaly red patch** which may ooze or bleed, resembling eczema.
4. **The emergence of new spots or moles that look abnormal:** These can be tan, black, red, pink, white, or even blue or purple. They're often irregular in shape, with uneven borders.
5. **Other skin changes:** Itching, tenderness or pain, changes in pigmentation beyond the border of a mole or a spreading colour from the border of a mole into the surrounding skin, and inflammation of the skin nearest to the border are all noteworthy.

Seek professional medical advice if you notice any suspicious changes or unexplained skin symptoms.

Just by being more aware of the higher risk, spreading awareness, and encouraging preventative measures, we can do our part to turn the tide against skin cancer.





www.bankmed.co.za



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