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## **PREVENTION, DETECTION AND COVER VITAL IN CONQUERING DIABETES**

Approximately 6.5-million South Africans are currently living with some form of diabetes. However, while the illness can be avoided or easily controlled, it is essential that those affected have the appropriate medical cover to ensure the disease is effectively managed, particularly with estimates that diabetes will be the seventh leading cause of death worldwide by 2030.

Ahead of World Diabetes Day on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2011, Dr Dominique Stott, Medical Standards and Services Executive at PPS, says preventative measures, early detection and sound medical cover are essential in the battle against diabetes. “The treatment of any form of diabetes requires lifelong medication which must be taken regularly in order to prevent any long-term and expensive complications such as coronary artery disease, nerve damage, poor circulation, vision problems and kidney disease.”

“Diagnosis of diabetes is a simple blood glucose test which can be done by any doctor. However, regular follow-ups and medical checks are vital to ensure that if complications do develop, they can be addressed early enough to prevent more serious implications, resulting in hospitalisation.”

She says that there are two types of diabetes: Type I is when the body does not produce enough insulin while Type II is when the body cannot effectively use the insulin being produced and is closely related to obesity, metabolic syndrome and lifestyle.

Dr Stott says diabetes Type II is far more prevalent than Type I in South Africa, as a result of the increase in obesity. “Even more concerning is the fact that with the enormous growth in childhood obesity, Type II has become far more common in children and is now being seen in those as young as 10 years of age.”

“Typical symptoms of Type II include gradual development of increasing thirst, blurring vision, unusual fatigue and more frequent urination, for many years before being diagnosed. This is why regular check-ups are so important; if symptoms are not detected early enough, damage can be caused to blood vessels of critical organs, leading to further complications.”

She says that while diabetes can develop in anyone, especially those with metabolic syndrome or simple obesity, those with a family history of any form of diabetes are at a far higher risk of developing the disease. “Anyone who has a family history of diabetes or is obese must discuss the possibility of regular testing for diabetes. This is a simple blood test which indicates if someone is diabetic or even in a pre-diabetic state. If an obese person is pre-diabetic it is possible for them to revert to normal if they maintain a normal weight.”

“Should one develop diabetes, both life and disability covers would also be affected, so it is advisable to ensure that this cover is taken out before the possible onset of this disease. In the early stages of the disease, it might still be possible to get some forms of insurance such as life insurance, but this would not be possible once there are any complications. The important thing is to look after your health before complications develop, and ensure that you have sound medical and dread disease cover in place, especially if you fall into any high risk categories,” concludes Dr Stott.