



# CAN I USE MY MEDICAL AID SMARTLY – AND SAVE MONEY? **YES, HERE'S HOW**



## FINANCIAL WELLBEING

*Could your choices be decreasing your Medical Savings Account each year? Do you know how to work your medical scheme plan type to your advantage to avoid co-payments and out-of-pocket expenses when visiting healthcare providers or facilities?*

How well do you understand what it means to use network providers, or healthcare providers who are not in the network that's covered by your plan? Do you want to better understand the costs of claiming for over-the-counter medicine, or seeing doctors who charge more than the rate that the medical scheme covers? Let's explore ways to get to know more about how medical schemes work and to make the most of your cover and benefits.

### **LISTEN: AZANIA MOSAKA UNPACKS THE WORLD OF MEDICAL SCHEMES FOR YOU**

Listen to 'Understanding the world of healthcare' (episode 1 in the Discovery Healthier series) to hear Azania Mosaka explain how medical schemes work.



## SIX TIPS FOR MAKING SMART USE OF YOUR MEDICAL AID

- 01** | Take time to understand your plan type: When you understand your plan type and are sure it meets your needs, you will know exactly what you can claim for and what you may have to pay for yourself. Some medical expenses may not be covered on your plan type at all, or you may have to pay part of the cost yourself (this is called a co-payment).
  - Some plan types pay medical costs at the rates set out in the national reference price lists, while other plans pay at a higher rate. Medical schemes often have agreements with healthcare providers in a network. Through these agreements, members of the scheme can get healthcare at lower rates or at a cost the scheme will pay for in full.
  - When your healthcare provider charges within the rates that your plan covers, they will often send the claim for your visit to your medical scheme for you. The scheme will then pay your healthcare provider directly.
- 02** | Know the rates your doctors charge. You don't have to be embarrassed to discuss money with healthcare providers. It's the same as with any other service or product you buy. Ask about their rates and ask your medical scheme what percentage of your claim they will pay if you use a particular healthcare provider. Your medical aid can also tell you how you are covered on your plan. This way, you know upfront if you'll have a co-payment. You can then choose if you want to shop around for a provider, maybe one in the medical scheme's network of providers who charges the rates at which your plan pays out.
- 03** | Tap into the networks of healthcare providers your medical scheme may have. Most medical schemes have arrangements with a network of healthcare providers to help you save. In these networks, your medical scheme pays claims directly to providers, based on your plan. Direct payment means less admin for you, and using a network keeps the cost down. Discovery Health Medical Scheme, for example, has an extensive network of GPs and other healthcare providers. We make sure we pay claims in full and directly to these providers. If you're not sure if a provider is part of a network, call your medical aid or visit their website.
- 04** | Know the payment arrangements with specialists. This can help avoid co-payments and extra admin. As an example, Discovery Health Medical Scheme has direct payment arrangements with most of South Africa's specialists, on most of its plans. If you see one of these specialists, you won't have a co-payment. When a specialist does not have an arrangement with your medical scheme, you may have to pay them upfront or pay part of the costs yourself – depending on your plan. Know your plan well. Use your medical scheme's website or call them to find out about your options.
- 05** | Avoid co-payments by using pharmacy networks. To give you full cover for medicine, your medical scheme has pharmacy networks where you'll have no co-payment on medicines that are on the scheme's medicine list. There are now more than 2,500 pharmacies in the network that Discovery Health Medical Scheme members use. It's worth finding out who they are so you can save money on your medicine by having no co-payments.
- 06** | Pay cash for over-the-counter medicine. Don't claim for everything from your medical aid. As far as possible, pay cash for over-the-counter headache tablets, cough syrup and similar types of medicine. This will help to stretch the money in your Medical Savings Account so you can use it for more expensive treatments you may need.

All in all, when you know your plan and how it works, it is possible to save. Take time to go through your plan and understand the savings you get from using network providers and facilities. Also get advice from your financial adviser about the plan that is best for you. You have an opportunity to increase your cover at the end of every year, so talk to your adviser and decide if you need to make changes.