The ABC of medical aid
Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.

- Mark Twain
I’m fit and healthy – why do I need a medical aid?

If you are quite healthy and only occasionally visit the doctor for the odd cold or flu, you may feel satisfied to pay the costs of those visits out of your own pocket. But medical emergencies and the treatment for some chronic illnesses can run into tens (sometimes hundreds) of thousands of rand and be financially crippling to families.

Will I be penalised if I join a medical aid later in life?

You can be penalised if you join a medical aid after age 35. Late joiner penalties may then apply resulting in you paying more (from 5% to as much as 75% more, depending on any previous medical cover you’ve had) on your monthly contribution. If you wait to be diagnosed with a chronic condition before applying for membership, you may also have a three-month general and/or 12-month condition-specific waiting period. During this time you will have to pay your full contribution without being able to claim.

How is my medical aid contribution determined? Do I pay for others?

Medical aids are non-profit entities. Contributions are pooled together to cater for payment of all healthcare (claims) costs as well as non-healthcare (e.g., administration and broker fees) costs. The healthier, non-claiming members help to cross-subsidise the claims of the older, sicker members. This means when you fall ill, you will be subsidised too, and without cross-subsidisation medical aids will need substantially higher contribution increases year on year and become unaffordable.
Will medical tests be necessary before I join?

Depending on the information you provide on your application form, further medical examinations may be required by the scheme as part of the underwriting process. It is important to fully disclose any health conditions you have and/or for which you have requested medical advice in the 12 months preceding your date of application. If you don’t, you will run the risk of having your membership suspended or even cancelled.

What are the important questions to ask about a medical aid?

To determine the best healthcare option for you and your family, speak to an accredited financial planner. It is important to find the right compromise between what you can afford and what your or your family’s needs are. Understand how to unlock the best value for money from your option. For instance, by choosing to make use of certain service providers, you may be able to select an option with a lower contribution. Momentum Health members (except those on the Ingwe option) are also able to earn additional savings to fund GP visits, dentistry and optometry with Momentum’s HealthReturns programme (at no extra monthly cost).

I find it too confusing to choose between multiple options.

Medical aid options can be confusing. A financial planner can advise you on the best plan for your circumstances.

What if I choose a particular option, but then fall seriously ill and need a better one?

Once a year, during November, you get the chance to either upgrade or downgrade your plan. Option changes are effective from 1 January of the following year. Make sure you are well aware of the cover and contribution on your new option, before changing.

If you fall seriously ill during the year and wish to upgrade your option, you will have to submit a written motivation to the medical aid’s Board of Trustees for consideration.
Will my family members still be covered if I die?

They will be covered until the end of the month of your last contribution paid. Your dependants can choose to continue membership, and the monthly contribution will be adjusted in accordance with the new number of beneficiaries covered. By taking out Momentum’s HealthWaiver product, you can also ensure that their contributions are covered for another five or ten years, whichever you choose.

How can I enhance my membership?

Some medical aids offer their members access to loyalty programmes. Multiply, Momentum’s rewards and wellness programme, offers discounts and benefits from more than 40 partners, covering a range from travel to health and including the likes of Dis-Chem, Mango, Avis and Virgin Active.

Momentum’s HealthReturns programme enables members to earn monetary incentives, and benefits such as free GP visits, without it costing them anything extra, purely by taking care of their health (doing an annual health assessment) and being active.

The HealthSaver from Momentum allows you to save up for medical expenses not covered on your option, such as refractive eye surgery. By choosing to pay HealthReturns into their HealthSaver accounts, members can earn up to as much as R5 400 in HealthReturns per year.

For fast and efficient access to healthcare information or to search for a service provider near you day and night, the Momentum Health mobi app is just the solution.
Can Momentum suggest a financial planner to help me pick the best plan?

Phone our call centre at 0861 300 789 or visit our website, momentumhealth.co.za. If you want us to recommend one of Momentum’s financial planners, click on “Get an adviser to contact me” in the white block in the bottom right-hand corner of the page.