



## Getting medical aid in your 20s is a smart move

You're young, you're free, and you've just landed your first real job with a decent salary. You're also healthy, you exercise regularly, and follow a balanced diet. So why spend your hard-earned money on medical aid instead of a new car, travel, or entertainment?

### When life happens

Accidents, sudden illness, or injuries can happen to anyone, regardless of age. Without significant savings for medical emergencies, medical treatment costs could leave you with a mountain of debt.

"In our experience, the two main reasons young people – even those in their thirties and forties – delay taking out medical cover are the cost, and thinking it's unnecessary," says Koen Moleko, Senior Manager: Business Development, at Medihelp Medical Scheme. "However, waiting too long could end up costing you more, and you may not have the cover you need when you need it."

### Factors to consider

Before ruling out healthcare cover, consider these factors that Moleko points out:

- **Affordability:** Medical aid can be costly, but some cover is better than none. Even a hospital plan is a good start.
- **Underwriting:** Medical scheme underwriting rules and the Medical Schemes Act determine that, in certain circumstances, a person who wasn't a member of a medical scheme for 90 days or more before joining can have a three-month general waiting period, a 12-month condition-specific waiting period, and a late-joiner penalty.
- **Treatment costs:** Medical care is very expensive, especially hospital stays and specialised tests such as computerised tomography (CT) scans. One event could leave you with debt the size of a home loan.
- **Treatment costs vs medical aid contribution:** The monthly contribution to medical aid often is a fraction of the cost of medical treatment.
- **Public vs private:** Compared to private healthcare, public healthcare in South Africa faces many serious challenges.

- **Medical aid cover and mortality:** A [recent American study](#) found that people without health insurance have a decreased chance of survival. Preventive care and early detection are vital for managing health over time, as many people without medical aid tend to skip regular screenings and tests.
- **Preventive healthcare:** Most medical aids pay for preventive services such as screenings, vaccines, and psychological counselling.
- **Increase in lifestyle illnesses:** Lung and heart conditions, cancer, and stroke are increasing due to our sedentary lifestyle and affecting more young people than before.

## Other considerations

- **Peace of mind:** Having medical aid ensures you're covered in case of unexpected medical emergencies, giving you peace of mind.
- **Health maintenance:** Regular check-ups and early intervention can prevent more serious health issues down the line, making medical aid crucial for maintaining overall health.
- **Financial protection:** Medical aid protects you from the financial burden of unexpected medical costs and helps manage chronic conditions with chronic medicine benefits and disease management programmes.
- **Access to better healthcare:** Medical aid members typically have access to a broad network of healthcare providers, including private hospitals and specialists, ensuring that you receive high-quality care when you need it most.
- **Comprehensive coverage:** Many medical aid plans offer comprehensive cover, including dental care, optometry, and mental health services. This holistic approach ensures that all aspects of your well-being are taken care of.

"It's normal to feel invincible in your twenties, but life is unpredictable. A reliable medical aid helps you protect your health and shields you from financial ruin due to unexpected medical expenses. Even if you start with a basic plan, at Medihelp we believe that medical aid should be a non-negotiable item on your monthly budget – one that will benefit your health and financial well-being now and in the long run," Molekoa concludes.