

CHANGING YOUR MEDICAL SCHEME PLAN

What you should know when up- or downgrading your medical scheme plan during the year

It is important to review your cover annually and check whether it still caters to your changing health, lifestyle and financial needs. Meeting your budget and having sufficient medical cover can be challenging, since one cannot accurately anticipate future healthcare costs.

Fortunately, most medical schemes allow downgrades during the course of the year, but:

- you can only upgrade to a more comprehensive plan **once a year;**
- upgrading will obviously **cost more;**
- on a positive note, upgrading will include **additional benefits.**

S I M E K A
HEALTH

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Important considerations before downgrading

Understand your current medical scheme plan and what it offers

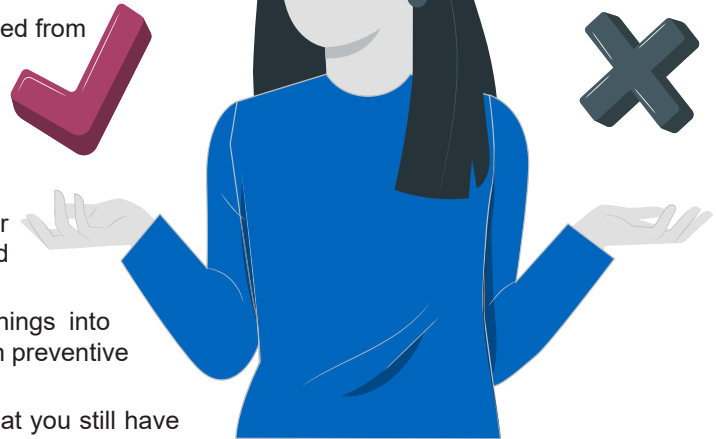
- Make sure you understand what you are covered for.
- Consider using healthcare network service providers that offer a lower contribution rate.
- Always ask your healthcare provider what rates they charge to see if you are covered partly or in full.

Cheaper plans mean fewer benefits

- Downgrading could decrease benefits such as doctor visits provided from your risk cover, resulting in increased out of pocket payments.
- Downgrading could also impact your chronic conditions and medication list, with more limited choices of medication.

Do a proper cost analysis before downgrading

- Assess your past healthcare spend – this should include your premium, co-payments, the cost of your chronic medication and expenses such as over-the-counter medication, etc.
- Certain medical schemes include recommended annual screenings into their risk benefit, which means you may not have to pay for certain preventive screenings.
- Healthy members could get away with basic cover, but ensure that you still have chronic medication benefits as these are costly.
- Consider any changes to dependents on your health plan in the coming year, such as adding an aging parent or removing a child who's turning 21.



Please always speak to an accredited healthcare consultant for guidance before changing your medical scheme plan.

Mental health

A study by the University of Witwatersrand reveals that South Africans suffer higher rates of depression and anxiety than other countries, but only a quarter of those affected receive treatment.

Through awareness of your mental health state, you can recognise early signs of mental illness and seek professional support or treatment, which if approved, can be funded by your medical scheme.

Seek help

- The South African depression and anxiety group [SADAG](#), the largest mental health organisation in Africa provides support and counseling.
- Information from the [World Health Organization](#) is designed to inspire and inform better mental health for everyone.

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