**Why your flu shot matters this winter**

**JOHANNESBURG - As the chill of winter settles across South Africa, flu viruses begin to circulate more quickly – in offices, classrooms, public transport and even homes. This year, the 2025 flu season arrived earlier and more intense than expected, prompting healthcare professionals to urge South Africans to act fast. One of the simplest and most effective ways to protect yourself and those around you is by getting the seasonal flu vaccine.**

Getting the flu shot is not just about avoiding a few days of discomfort. It's about protecting your body, preserving your time and energy, and keeping your community safe. It's a proactive step towards a healthier winter – and it could make all the difference.

**Why you need the flu shot now**

According to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) flu cases are already rising, making it essential to act before infections peak.

Unlike a common cold, influenza is a highly contagious virus that can cause high fever, body aches, extreme fatigue, and respiratory distress. In severe cases, it can lead to hospitalisation or even death – particularly in individuals with compromised immune systems or pre-existing conditions.

The flu shot helps your body build antibodies that protect against the most common strains predicted for the year. It takes about two weeks for your body to develop this immunity.

The flu vaccine is vital for **people who are severely vulnerable to illness**, including:

* Pregnant women
* Older adults (65+)
* Children under five
* Individuals with chronic health conditions (including HIV, diabetes, TB, asthma and heart disease)
* Healthcare workers and caregivers
* People living in crowded environments or with limited access to healthcare

Even if you're young and healthy, getting vaccinated is still vital. Flu viruses spread easily, and many people are contagious before showing symptoms. By getting your flu shot, you protect those around you – elderly parents, your children, or co-workers with health conditions – without even realising it.

Getting vaccinated is a personal health decision, but its impact extends beyond the individual.

**Common flu vaccine myths**

Despite being widely available and medically recommended, many South Africans still hesitate to get the flu vaccine due to misinformation:

1. *"I'll get sick from the vaccine."*

You won't. The vaccine is made from an inactivated virus, so it cannot cause flu. Mild side effects like a sore arm or low-grade fever are signs your immune system is responding.

1. *"I got the flu even after getting the shot."*

The vaccine doesn't guarantee you won't get sick but significantly reduces your risk of severe illness and complications. If you get the flu, your symptoms will likely be milder and shorter in duration.

1. *"I don't need it – I never get sick."*

Immunity changes over time, and each flu season brings different strains. Even if you've avoided the flu in the past, this year could be different. Prevention is always better than cure.

**Protect yourself this winter**

While hygiene habits like handwashing and staying home when sick remain important, vaccination is your best defence. The flu vaccine is a simple but powerful way to stay healthy this winter. Once you catch the flu, treatment options are limited – and recovery can mean several days in bed, missed work, or even severe complications like pneumonia for high-risk individuals.

The flu shot is quick, affordable, and widely accessible at GP practices, pharmacies and pharmacy clinics, private clinics, workplace wellness programmes, public hospitals and community clinics.

All Medshield members are covered for the flu vaccine through their Wellness benefit. Many providers accept walk-ins with minimal wait times. Most people experience no side effects – just a quick jab, and you're protected. At Medshield, we believe prevention is the best medicine and as your *Partner for Life* we're committed to helping you stay healthy every season. Visit the Medshield Movement hub at [www.medshieldmovement.co.za](http://www.medshieldmovement.co.za) for more tips on staying well this winter.

Take the shot. Stay warm. Stay well.

**FIN**

(643 words)

**EDITORS NOTES**

**FURTHER MEDIA INFORMATION AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS**

* Stone issues this release on behalf of the Medshield Medical Scheme.
* For media enquiries or interview requests, please contact Willem Eksteen, CEO of Stone or a media liaison member of the Stone team at media@stone.consulting / 011 447 0168
* Alternatively, contact Lilané Swanepoel at Medshield at 010 597 4982 / lilanes@medshield.co.za

**MORE INFORMATION ON THE 2025 MEDSHIELD BENEFIT OPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

Benefits and Contribution amendments are subject to CMS approval.

Please refer to the 2025 Product Page on the Medshield website at [https://medshield.co.za](https://medshield.co.za/).

You can review the benefit adjustments, and value adds and download the 2025 benefit guides by visiting <https://medshield.co.za/2025-products/2025-benefit-options/> or by scanning the relevant QR code:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Benefit package and descriptor** | **QR code to view more detail** |
| **PremiumPlus** provides mature families and professionals with unlimited hospital cover in a hospital of their choice, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at 200% Medshield Private Tariff, and the freedom to manage daily healthcare expenses through a comprehensive Personal Savings Account and extended Above Threshold Cover.  | A qr code with a white background  Description automatically generated |
| **MediBonus** provides mature families and professionals with unlimited hospital cover in a hospital of their choice, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at 200% Medshield Private Tariff, and the independence to manage daily healthcare expenses through a substantial Day-to-Day Limit. | A qr code on a white background  Description automatically generated |
| **MediSaver** is perfect for independent individuals and young professionals thinking about expanding their families. MediSaver offers unlimited hospital cover in the Compact Hospital Network, with the freedom to manage daily healthcare expenses through a generous Personal Savings Account. | A qr code on a white background  Description automatically generated |
| **MediPlus** provides middle to upper-income families with complete healthcare cover for major medical and daily healthcare needs. Unlimited hospital cover is provided through a choice of two hospital networks, Prime or the value-focused Compact Hospital Network. Daily healthcare expenses are covered through a generous Day-to-Day Limit. Benefits are identical in both categories, Prime and Compact, with care coordination and doctor referral mandated on MediPlus Compact.  | A qr code on a white background  Description automatically generated |
| **MediCore** is ideal for healthy individuals looking for comprehensive hospital cover, with daily healthcare expenses self-managed. This option offers unlimited hospital cover in the Compact Hospital Network, with In-Hospital Medical Practitioner consultations and visits paid at Medshield Private Tariff 200%. Day-to-day healthcare expenses are self-funded. | A qr code on a white background  Description automatically generated |
| **MediValue** is the ideal option for growing families. It offers affordable cover for major medical and daily healthcare needs. Unlimited hospital cover is provided through a choice of two hospital networks, Prime or the value-focused Compact Hospital Network. Daily healthcare expenses are covered through a sizeable Day-to-Day Limit. Benefits are identical on both options, MediValue Prime and MediValue Compact, with care coordination and doctor referral mandated on MediValue Compact. | A qr code with a white background  Description automatically generated |
| **MediPhila** is ideal for families seeking first-time access to affordable private medical cover. As a MediPhila member, you have full cover for Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB) treatment plus R1 million per family for non-PMB In-Hospital treatment in the MediPhila Hospital Network. Coupled with this is Day-to-Day cover for your essential daily healthcare needs. | A qr code on a white background  Description automatically generated |
| **MediCurve** If you are tech-savvy, young and healthy, then MediCurve is the ideal first-time option for you! MediCurve provides generous hospital cover in the MediCurve Hospital Network combined with unlimited virtual Family Practitioner consultations and essential optical and dental cover through network providers | A qr code on a white background  Description automatically generated |

**MORE ABOUT MEDSHIELD MEDICAL SCHEME**

* You never know when you or your family member/s may require medical care or treatment, and most importantly, whether you will have funds available to cover the costs. Medshield is a healthcare fund where all members contribute to the fund every month to cater for medical coverage should the need arise. Medshield is a healthcare fund where all members contribute towards the fund monthly to cater for medical cover should the need arise.
* Medshield has been in operation since 1968, making us one of the most experienced, knowledgeable, and reliable medical schemes in South Africa. Our extensive experience in the healthcare sector guides our understanding of our members' needs. Our excellent cover and benefits and the best quality systems and services have resulted in our exceptional size and strength.
* Each of our options offers affordably priced benefits. We continuously review and improve the range of benefits in each option to bring you what you need.
* We partner with our stakeholders to enable access to sustainable and **affordable quality healthcare** through innovative products and benefits.
* Our impeccable reputation of prompt payments to hospitals, doctors, pharmacies and other medical caregivers guarantees approval from service providers when you present your Medshield membership card.
* Our extensive partner networks place us in the perfect position to offer exceptionally competitive rates to our members.
* Medshield is well-represented throughout all nine provinces and provides seamless access to service providers in your area. Our geographical spread provides convenience if it becomes necessary for you to have a personal discussion with one of our experienced consultants. We also have a streamlined online claim submission system and immediate contact centre assistance, making it easier to manage your membership and claims from the convenience of your home or office.
* Another distinguishing factor is our extensive range of additional benefits and services. These benefits and services have been designed to give members additional support when needed, for instance, in an emergency or when suffering from a chronic or life-threatening condition.
* Compared with other medical schemes, our trustworthiness, impeccable history, and exceptional service guarantee that we come out tops!
* As the interface between the Scheme and our members, Medshield staff are the backbone of our customer service delivery. The successful delivery of service depends entirely on the calibre of our people.