**CONSUMER ARTICLE**

 **Is it a stroke or a heart attack?**

**Johannesburg - The heart is often referred to as the body's engine room, and rightly so. It pumps life-sustaining blood throughout the body 100,000 times daily via a 97,000-kilometre-long network of vessels. However, this mighty organ increasingly needs protection against two common disorders – heart attacks and strokes**.

Categorised as cardiovascular diseases, heart attacks, and strokes are a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels. In the case of a heart attack, the blood flow to your heart is suddenly blocked. In comparison, a stroke occurs when there is a sudden interruption of blood flow to your brain. Both events are considered medical emergencies, which, if left untreated or unchecked, can lead to disability or death.

**Protecting your heart, no matter your age**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally, with more than 85% of deaths attributed to heart attack and stroke. Another report by [McLeod Health](https://www.mcleodhealth.org/blog/heart-attacks-theyre-not-just-for-the-elderly/) states that not long ago, heart attacks were primarily a problem faced by older adults. It was rare for anyone younger than 40 to have a heart attack. Fast forward to now, 1 in 5 heart attack patients are younger than 40 years of age, and it gets worse. Having a heart attack in your 20s or early 30s has become more common. Furthermore, between the years 2000-2016, the heart attack rate increased by 2% every year in this young age group.

The good news is that most cardiovascular diseases can be prevented by addressing behavioural and environmental risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and obesity, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol and air pollution. It is, therefore, crucial to detect cardiovascular disease as early as possible so that effective management with counselling and medication can begin. If you are young, whether male or female, do not let the misconception that heart attacks only happen to the elderly stand in the way of seeking treatment.Symptoms such as chest pain and shortness of breath should always be taken seriously.

**Heart attacks and strokes: What to look for**

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), a heart attack or stroke may be the first sign of an underlying disease. Chest pain was thought to be a universal symptom of heart attacks, but decades of research have proven that heart attack symptoms aren't so clear-cut and vary based on several factors, including gender, age, and health profile.

Symptoms of a **heart attack** include:

* pain or discomfort in the centre of the chest,
* pain or discomfort in the arms, the left shoulder, elbows, jaw, or back.

In addition, you may have trouble breathing, shortness of breath, nausea or vomiting, light-headedness or faintness, a cold sweat, and turning pale. Women are more likely than men to have shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

The most common symptom of **stroke,** on the other hand, is a sudden and powerful headache. Other symptoms include the sudden onset of:

* numbness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body;
* confusion, difficulty speaking or understanding speech;
* difficulty seeing with one or both eyes;
* difficulty walking, dizziness or loss of balance or coordination;
* severe headache with no known cause or
* fainting or unconsciousness.

If you suspect that someone may be having a stroke or heart attack, call for medical help immediately.

**Prevention is vital to managing heart attack and stroke**

As always, prevention is better than cure. By making healthy life choices, going for regular checkups and learning to recognise heart attack and stroke symptoms, you can help lower your risk of both events, increasing your life expectancy and well-being.

At Medshield, we want to partner with you to improve your healthcare and well-being. We offer various affordable benefits and a range of plans that suit your specific needs, specifically the annual Wellness Benefits that cover a range of preventative tests and help to identify possible issues early. Having been in operation since 1968, we are one of the most experienced, most knowledgeable, and most reliable medical schemes in South Africa. You can quote us on that!

**FIN**

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**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.