**Breaking the stigma on anorexia and eating disorders**

**Johannesburg - Have you ever started the new year with high hopes of improving your health, only to feel overwhelmed by the pressure to look a certain way? You're not alone. While setting goals for better wellness is a great idea, focusing too much on weight or appearance can sometimes lead to unintended consequences, like developing an unhealthy relationship with food. Eating disorders, such as Anorexia Nervosa, are more common than many of us realise and can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, or background.**

Eating disorders aren't just about food; they're deeply connected to how people feel about themselves and their bodies. These conditions can disrupt lives, affecting both physical health and emotional well-being.

**About Anorexia Nervosa**

Anorexia Nervosa is a serious condition where individuals become obsessed with controlling their weight through extreme measures like limiting food intake or excessive exercise. It's not about vanity; it's a complex mental health challenge that can have long-term effects on both the body and mind.

A [recent article](https://www.medicalschemes.co.za/cmscript-on-anorexia/) by the CMS highlights the long-term effects of anorexia, which include infertility, organ damage, bone density loss, and increased risk of heart failure. With a mortality rate as high as 20%, anorexia is the deadliest mental health disorder. There are two types of Anorexia Nervosa, namely:

* **Restrictive Anorexia Nervosa:** This involves severely limiting the amount of food eaten, often alongside over-exercising or using appetite suppressants while being marked by intense malnutrition.
* **Purgative Anorexia Nervosa:** In this type, people may binge on food and then purge by vomiting or misusing laxatives and diuretics. Even small amounts of food can trigger these behaviours.

Early detection is key to effective treatment. Here are some **signs to watch for:**

* **Physical Symptoms:**
	+ Rapid weight loss.
	+ Dizziness or fainting.
	+ Fatigue and low energy.
	+ Digestive issues.
* **Behavioural Symptoms:**
	+ Avoiding meals or eating tiny portions.
	+ Exercising excessively, even when tired or injured.
	+ Using unhealthy methods to control weight, such as vomiting or laxatives.
* **Psychological Symptoms:**
	+ Obsessive fear of gaining weight.
	+ Distorted body image – seeing themselves as overweight despite being underweight.
	+ Denial of the severity of their condition.

**Other common eating disorders**

While anorexia is a critical concern, it's not the only eating disorder affecting individuals. Here are two others to be aware of:

* **Bulimia Nervosa:** People with bulimia often cycle between binge eating and purging. They may feel a lack of control during eating episodes and later compensate through vomiting, laxatives, or extreme exercise.
* **Binge-Eating Disorder (BED):** Unlike bulimia, BED does not involve purging. Instead, individuals consume large amounts of food in short periods, often feeling guilt or distress afterwards. This condition can lead to obesity and related health challenges.

**Medshield's commitment to your wellness**

Getting the right help is crucial, and that's where Medshield Medical Scheme comes in. As part of your cover, eating disorders are classified under Prescribed Minimum Benefits (PMBs), ensuring access to necessary care. Medshield offers a range of support for members managing eating disorders.

* **Hospital Care:** Up to three weeks of inpatient yearly inpatient treatment for severe cases requiring close monitoring.
* **Outpatient Care:** Up to 15 consultations annually with professionals like psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and occupational therapists.
* **Medication Support:** Coverage for prescribed medications, such as antidepressants, provided they align with the scheme's formulary.
* **Designated Service Providers (DSPs):** Treatment is available through Medshield's network of providers. Choosing non-DSPs may lead to additional out-of-pocket costs.

If you or someone you care about is struggling with an eating disorder, know that help is available. The journey to recovery begins with reaching out to professionals. Speak with a general practitioner or a specialist experienced in treating eating disorders to develop an appropriate treatment plan. Medshield members can access a wealth of benefits designed to support their recovery journey, so don't hesitate to contact the scheme for guidance. Finally, building a strong support system is invaluable – open up to trusted friends and family and consider joining a support group or community resource to stay motivated.

As you pursue wellness goals, remember that health is more than numbers on a scale. Pay attention to your energy levels, strength, and overall well-being rather than appearance. Aim for realistic and sustainable goals that you can maintain in the long term. Above all, practice kindness toward yourself, celebrate small victories, and don't be too hard on yourself when challenges arise.

If you're dealing with an eating disorder or have questions about your benefits, we're just a call away. Let's make 2025 the year of health, balance, and understanding – together.

**FIN**

(754 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:

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| **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.