**Preparing for a healthy pregnancy – Nutrition and support for you and your baby**

**Johannesburg - Bringing a new life into the world is exciting, and feeling nervous about it is also natural. First-time moms (and dads) may wonder about the changes ahead, including shifts in nutritional needs for both mom and baby's health. Here is a useful tip: getting your body ready can start before you even see that positive pregnancy test! Doctors often recommend adding dietary supplements and vitamins into your routine a month or so before trying to conceive. This proactive approach can help you feel more confident and supported as you begin this important journey.**

The journey to a healthy pregnancy is about caring for your whole self; your mind, body, and heart. It is not just about eating well or taking vitamins – it is about understanding what your body needs to support the growth of a new life. Your healthcare provider, whether a clinic nurse, gynaecologist, or family doctor, can give you personalised advice that aligns with your needs, lifestyle, and budget. Let us walk through a few critical steps to prepare.

**Starting prenatal vitamins before pregnancy**

Prenatal vitamins provide vital nutrients for both maternal health and healthy foetal development. But did you know that you do not have to wait until you are pregnant to start? Many healthcare providers recommend starting prenatal vitamins a little early, as they are packed with nutrients like folic acid, iron, and calcium, essential from the beginning of pregnancy.

* **Folic acid** is one of the most essential nutrients crucial for early foetal development, especially in forming the brain and spinal cord. Since these developments begin in the first few weeks of pregnancy, starting folic acid before conceiving can give your baby the best start. You will find folate (the natural form of folic acid) in leafy greens like kale and spinach, but prenatal vitamins ensure you get enough daily.
* **Iron** helps develop red blood cells that carry oxygen throughout the body and is even more critical during pregnancy. Increased iron supports the placenta and foetal development. Foods like lean meats and beans also provide iron, but prenatal vitamins help ensure you meet your needs.
* **Calcium** helps develop strong bones and teeth. During pregnancy, calcium needs are higher to support the baby's growth while keeping the mom's bones strong.

Your healthcare provider can guide you on the specific vitamins and supplements that are most beneficial, as well as those that may be best to avoid. For medical aid members, some prenatal vitamins are often covered by day-to-day benefits or a medical savings account. Be sure to talk to your pharmacist or healthcare provider about generic or more affordable options if you are looking to save on costs.

Remember, though, that prenatal vitamins work best when paired with a balanced diet, so aim to include a variety of nutrient-rich foods. Eating a balanced diet packed with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can provide the foundation your body needs. If you are unsure about a balanced diet during pregnancy, ask your healthcare provider or a registered dietitian for tips. A good plan supports you and your baby, keeping you healthy and energised.

**Holistic care for a healthy pregnancy**

A healthy pregnancy does not stop at physical health – it's about looking after your emotional and mental well-being, too. One way to do this is by joining support groups or online communities specifically for expecting moms. These groups provide a place to ask questions, find resources, and get emotional support from people going through the same experiences.

[Medshield Mom](https://medshieldmom.co.za/) is a free online portal and a valuable resource for parents-to-be and parents of little ones. Medshield Mom offers a wealth of knowledge and support tailored to each stage of pregnancy. From expert advice and information to access to a community of other moms-to-be, Medshield Mom keeps you informed and connected.

Mpoomy Ledwaba, Medshield Mom's ambassador, shares her relatable mom experiences in a [podcast](https://medshieldmom.co.za/medshield-mom-mpoomy-ledwaba-5/) designed especially for Medshield moms. [Medshield Mom's Prenatal Yoga Series with Cami Be Yoga](https://medshieldmom.co.za/medshield-mom-connection-meditation/) offers safe, gentle exercise options to help you feel strong and balanced.

Pregnancy brings a lot of changes, and it's normal to feel a bit unsure along the way. But remember, you are not alone. Whether you have questions about diet, exercise, or how medical aid covers prenatal care, talking to your healthcare provider can help you feel reassured. They can guide you on the various stages of pregnancy care and clarify how your medical aid can support you through it all.

Being proactive about your health can make the journey into motherhood smoother and more enjoyable. By focusing on your wellness now, you're setting up a solid foundation for you and your baby.

**Embrace this journey with confidence**

Pregnancy is a life-changing experience filled with joy, anticipation, and sometimes a few worries. Embrace the journey knowing that with a bit of planning and support, you're doing everything you can to prepare. From vitamins and balanced diets to emotional support and reliable resources, every step you take helps ensure a healthy and happy pregnancy.

With Medshield Mom by your side, a network of supportive people, and the guidance of your healthcare provider, you can feel confident that you're well-prepared to welcome your little one into the world. After all, preparing for a healthy pregnancy isn't just about getting your body ready – it's about preparing for all the beautiful moments.

**FIN**

(890 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.