**How nutrition shapes your health and happiness**

**JOHANNESBURG - What if we told you that your daily food choices hold the key to how you feel, look, and age? Nutrition isn't just about filling your stomach – it fuels your body, strengthens your immune system, and plays a key role in disease prevention. Yet, in a fast-paced world of quick meals and processed convenience, many South Africans are trapped in cycles of poor health driven by what's on their plate.**

Food is not just fuel, but medicine, energy, and self-care wrapped into every bite.

**More than just calories**

Recent data shows that almost [half of South African adults](https://hsrc.ac.za/news/food-security/almost-50-of-adult-south-africans-are-overweight-or-obese-poverty-and-poor-nutrition-are-largely-to-blame/#:~:text=Photo:%20Pexels,used%20to%20compile%20the%20report.) are overweight or obese, mainly due to eating too many unhealthy calories. At the same time, many people in the country struggle with hunger and a lack of proper nutrition. It creates a "double burden" where some suffer from obesity while others face undernutrition.

Unfortunately, highly processed, sugar-loaded, and nutrient-poor diets have become the norm. A common myth is that healthy eating is expensive. Fresh, unprocessed foods are often more affordable in the long run than frequent takeaways and medical bills. At the same time, home-cooked meals are healthier and significantly cheaper than restaurant dining.

Your diet directly impacts your immune system, heart health, weight, energy levels, and even your mood. From the moment you wake up, your body is working – pumping blood, fuelling your brain, repairing muscles, and even fighting invisible threats like bacteria and inflammation. Everything you add to your body either helps or harms this process. Many people feel sluggish, bloated, or constantly craving snacks, often without realising that it is directly linked to their diet. The solution is simple - return to real, whole foods.

**The silent killers in your diet**

1. The sugar trap

Sugar is everywhere, from soft drinks to cereals, flavoured yoghurts to sauces, and is addictive. South Africans consume [12 to 24 teaspoons of sugar daily](https://www.mydynamics.co.za/world-sugar-week-18-24-november-shines-spotlight-on-hiddensugars-and-health-risks/), exceeding the World Health Organisation's (WHO) six-teaspoon limit. Besides tooth decay, high sugar intake fuels obesity, type 2 diabetes, pancreatitis, and cancer. Excess sugar overworks the pancreas, leading to insulin resistance and serious health risks.

Swap it for fresh fruits, honey in moderation, or snacks like nuts and dark chocolate. Save by choosing seasonal produce – it is fresher and cheaper.

1. The processed food problem

Fast food and packaged snacks may be convenient, but contain preservatives, unhealthy fats, and hidden salt. The result is higher cholesterol, increased blood pressure, and a greater risk of lifestyle diseases.

Swap it for home-cooked meals with whole ingredients, grilled rather than fried foods, and choose fresh snacks over packaged snacks. Plan meals to avoid impulse purchases and food waste.

1. The low-nutrient diet

Despite eating regularly, many South Africans lack essential nutrients like iron, calcium, and vitamin D. Highly processed foods lack the vitamins and minerals needed for strong bones, a sharp mind, and an active immune system.

Swap it for leafy greens, beans, dairy or fortified alternatives, and foods rich in omega-3 like salmon and flaxseeds. Save money by buying in bulk – beans, lentils, and grains are affordable and last long.

**How good nutrition transforms your health**

Think of your body as a high-performance vehicle. If you put in the wrong fuel, it sputters, slows down, and eventually breaks down. But with the correct fuel, it runs smoothly, efficiently, and powerfully.

* **Immune system:** a well-nourished body fights off infections more effectively. Vitamin C (citrus fruits, peppers, broccoli) boosts white blood cells, zinc (nuts, seeds, shellfish) speeds up healing, and probiotics and fibre (yoghurt, fermented foods, whole grains) support gut health, a key player in immunity.
* **Heart health:** diet plays a significant role in heart health. Healthy fats (avocados, olive oil, fish) lower bad cholesterol, less salt (avoiding processed foods) keeps blood pressure in check, and fibre-rich foods (oats, beans, whole grains) prevent artery blockages.
* **Mental well-being:** the brain thrives on omega-3s (fish, flaxseeds, walnuts) for memory, dark leafy greens (spinach, kale) to slow cognitive decline, and B vitamins (eggs, dairy, whole grains) for stress relief. Poor diets are linked to higher depression and anxiety, showing that food affects both body and mind.
* **Hydration superpower:** water supports digestion, detoxification, and energy. Many people drink more sugary beverages than water, leading to fatigue and cravings. Carry a water bottle and aim for at least two litres daily for better focus and vitality.

**Your future starts on your plate**

Good nutrition isn't about strict rules or short-term diets; it is a long-term investment in your health, energy, and quality of life. Even slight changes can have a significant impact on your health over time.

If you need inspiration to prepare simple, delicious, nutritious meals, visit the Medshield Movement [recipes page](https://medshieldmovement.co.za/resource-hub/?data-cat=recipes). Medshield Movement is a free health and wellness platform designed to help you stay active, eat well, and take control of your well-being.

Whether you are looking to boost your immune system, manage your weight, or simply feel better in your skin, the right food can make all the difference. So, the next time you sit down for a meal, ask yourself: Am I feeding my body what it needs to flourish? Every bite you take is a choice. Choose wisely.

**FIN**

(858 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.