

## SPINAL CONSERVATIVE CARE PROGRAMME

### Introducing the Spinal Conservative Care Programme

Back pain is one of the most common medical conditions experienced by members. Appropriate out-of-hospital conservative management of back pain has proven to deliver good outcomes and could prevent the need for surgery.

This programme will help you manage your condition with the support of a network of healthcare professionals that specialise in the treatment and rehabilitation of back and neck pain.

This document gives you more information about the Spinal Conservative Care Programme, which is available on both of the benefit options offered by the Scheme.

### About some of the terms we use in this document

Here are the meanings of some terms we refer to in the document that you may not be familiar with:

TERMINOLOGY	DESCRIPTION
Cover	Cover refers to the benefits you have access to and how we pay for healthcare services such as consultations, medicine, and hospitals on your benefit option.
Scheme Rate	This is the rate we pay for healthcare services from hospitals, pharmacies, healthcare professionals and other providers of relevant health services.
Find a healthcare provider	This is a medical and provider search tool, which is available on the Discovery app and <a href="http://www.retailmedicalscheme.co.za">www.retailmedicalscheme.co.za</a>
HealthID	HealthID is an online digital platform that gives your doctor fast, up-to-date access to your health information. Once you have given consent, your doctor can use HealthID to access your medical history, make referrals to other healthcare professionals and check your relevant test results.

### Access to the programme subject to clinical entry criteria

You may qualify as a possible candidate for the Spinal Conservative Care Programme for conservative back or neck pain management, subject to clinical entry criteria and after a recent hospital stay or request for a spinal-related hospital admission. You also have the option of being referred to the Spinal Conservative Care Programme by a network spinal surgeon or network spinal general practitioner, who will assess your suitability for the programme. Where the clinical entry criteria are met, you will have the option of visiting one of our conservative care network healthcare professionals for a full assessment for enrolment on the programme. Please note that enrolment is subject to the assessment and is not guaranteed.

The Spinal Conservative Care Programme is a coordinated out-of-hospital programme for the conservative treatment of spinal pain. The programme offers you cover for, and access to:

- A network of physiotherapists and chiropractors who are trained in the management of spinal pain, supported by a network of spinal surgeons, where applicable.
- A focused Programme developed by experts in the conservative (non-surgical) management of back pain. The Programme is flexible, providing a combination of in-person and virtual care, as deemed necessary by the therapists, and may be overseen by a spinal surgeon in the network.

You will need to consult a chiropractor or physiotherapist in the conservative care network to be assessed for enrolment onto the programme. You must give your chosen healthcare professional consent to view

your medical records on HealthID so they can access your Electronic Health Record. Through the Programme, you and your treating healthcare professional can agree on key goals and track your progress.

### **Your chiropractor or physiotherapist will work with you to manage your condition**

Once enrolled, the Spinal Conservative Care Programme gives you access to a defined basket of care for up to 8 sessions completed with a network conservative care healthcare professional over a period up to 24 weeks. You can choose to consult either a network physiotherapist or a network chiropractor for your treatment or may choose a 10-week fully funded virtual care option.

Your treating healthcare professional will decide what is best for you and your condition. Once enrolled, we cover the healthcare professional's consultation fee in full. This will not affect your day-to-day benefits.

If you require additional conservative healthcare services outside of the sessions approved as part of the programmes defined basket of care, those services will be covered by your Option's benefits.

### **How to find a physiotherapist or chiropractor in the network**

To find a physiotherapist or chiropractor in the network:

**1. Log on to the Retail Medical Scheme website:**

On [www.retailmedicalscheme.co.za](http://www.retailmedicalscheme.co.za) under *Hospital and doctor visits > Find a healthcare professional:* type in the name or category of healthcare professional you would like to find closest to you e.g., physiotherapist, and your address, and select the search icon. To filter your results for physiotherapists or chiropractors in the Spinal Conservative Care Programme, select Care Programmes under the search filters, and tick the box for Spinal Conservative Care.

**2. Log on to your Discovery app:**

On the Discovery app, navigate to *Medical aid > Find a healthcare provider.* Type in the name or category of healthcare professional you would like to see e.g., chiropractor. Select *Filters > Care Programmes > Spinal Conservative Care* and then navigate back to the search page and select 'Apply'.

### **Your chosen healthcare professional will assess whether you are eligible to enroll on the programme**

Your healthcare professional needs to assess you to see whether you qualify to enroll on the Programme. With your consent, they will use HealthID to navigate your enrolment. They also have to capture specific clinical information related to your condition on HealthID during the course of the Programme.

### **Your cover on the programme**

If you are enrolled on the Spinal Conservative Care Programme:

- Any additional conservative healthcare services, outside of the sessions approved as part of the defined basket of care, will be covered in accordance with your Option's benefits.
- You may not change healthcare providers once you have been enrolled on the programme.
- If you stop the Programme, we do not have further benefits from the Programme.
- Where clinically appropriate, your conservative care network provider can refer you for further assessment with a network spinal surgeon. If you need to have surgery, your registration on the Spinal Conservative Care Programme will end.
- You may only enroll on the Spinal Conservative Care Programme once per year, even if your condition recurs, or a new area of concern arises.

- If you have had spinal surgery in the past 12 months, you do not qualify to be registered on the Programme.
- The benefits of the Programme exclude those for emergencies, oncology, congenital and trauma-related injuries. Those are covered according to the benefits on your benefit option.

### Queries and complaints

You may lodge a query or complaint with Retail Medical Scheme directly on **0860 101 252**, or if you are not satisfied with the service received from the Administrator, address a complaint in writing to the Principal Officer at the Scheme's registered address. Should your complaint remain unresolved, you may lodge a formal dispute by following the Retail Medical Scheme internal disputes process. You may find details of the process on [www.retailmedicalscheme.co.za](http://www.retailmedicalscheme.co.za)

You may, as a last resort, approach the Council for Medical Schemes for assistance.

Council for Medical Schemes Complaints Unit, Block A, Eco Glades 2 Office Park, 420 Witch-Hazel Avenue, Eco Park, Centurion, 0157 / 0861 123 267 / [complaints@medicalschemes.co.za](mailto:complaints@medicalschemes.co.za) / [www.medicalschemes.co.za](http://www.medicalschemes.co.za)