

Discovery, Momentum announce steep hikes for 2027 – far above recommended rate

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Increases are well above the Council for Medical Schemes' recommended 3.8% anchor.

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The increases are well above the Council for Medical Schemes’ recommended 3.8% anchor, plus a reasonable allowance for healthcare utilisation.

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Discovery Health Medical Scheme (DHMS), South Africa’s largest open medical scheme that provides cover to more than 2.7 million people, has announced member contribution increases of between 7.4% and 8.9% for 2027.

The weighted-average contribution increase for DHMS members across all its benefit options for 2027 will be 8.2%.

However, that’s more than double the 3.8% anchor, plus a reasonable allowance for healthcare utilisation, as recommended by the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS).

Momentum Health has announced a 7.9%



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weighted contribution increase of 7.35%. Bonitas Medical Fund said its average contribution increase for 2027 will be 8.7% across all plans.

“The CMS’s 3.8% benchmark keeps the focus on affordability, but it is a starting point rather than a prescribed or automatic contribution increase,” said Thoneshan Naidoo, CEO of Health Funders Association (HFA), a nonprofit that counts DHMS and Momentum among its members.

“Each scheme has its own membership profile, claims experience, benefit structure, cost pressures and financial position. An increase above CPI [consumer price index] may therefore be justified.”



Thoneshan Naidoo, CEO of the Health Funders Association, says medical aid contribution increases above the consumer price index may be justified as schemes have different member profiles and cost structures.

Supplied/HFA

Consumer inflation accelerated to an annual 4.4% in August, with the South African Reserve Bank warning, in its most recent monetary policy committee decision announcement, that upside risks to price growth remain.

With the rand now approaching R16.70/\$ and fuel prices projected to surge by about R3 per litre later this month as tensions in the Middle East put upward pressure on oil prices, concerns are rising that inflation may accelerate further in the coming months.

Health data presented at the 2026 Momentum Healthcare Insights Summit showed that SA's open medical scheme market contracted by 3% between 2019 and 2024.

Discovery Health Medical Scheme

Gross contribution increases for 2027 by benefit option

Benefit option	2027 increase
KeyCare	8.9%
Active Smart	7.4%
Smart (excluding Active Smart)	7.9%
Smart Saver	7.9%
Core (excluding Coastal Core)	7.9%
Coastal Core	8.9%
Saver (excluding Coastal Saver)	7.9%
Coastal Saver	8.4%
Priority	8.9%
Comprehensive	
(including Classic Smart Comprehensive)	8.9%
Executive	8.9%

Source: Discovery - Graphic: News24

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During that period, the average age of scheme members increased from 35 to 37, placing more pressure on the pooled reserves these schemes hold, as ageing members typically have more chronic health conditions.

“DHMS has consistently contained contribution increases within a medical inflation corridor of CPI plus 3% to 4%, reflecting a disciplined approach to balancing affordability with long-term sustainability,” said Dr Ron Whelan, CEO of Discovery Health, which administers the scheme. “We are acutely aware of the financial pressure facing SA households.

“Medical inflation is a challenge affecting health systems globally, not only medical schemes in SA.”

DHMS is introducing a new scheme in 2027 called Active Core, which provides unlimited hospital benefits within the specific hospital network from R3 750 a month for a family of three. It will charge

R1 700 for a principal member, R1 550 for an adult dependant and R500 per child dependant, which it says is the most affordable child dependant contribution in SA's open medical scheme market.

Active Core offers unlimited private hospital cover through the new Active Hospital Network, which includes more than 40 selected hospitals across SA.

**This story has been updated with Bonitas Medical Fund's 2027 contribution increase.*

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