

SPINAL CONSERVATIVE CARE PROGRAMME

DISCOVERY HEALTH MEDICAL SCHEME
2024





Spinal Conservative Care Programme

Back pain is one of the most common medical conditions experienced by Discovery Health Medical Scheme members. Appropriate out-of-hospital conservative management of back pain has proven to deliver optimal 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 all Discovery Health Medical Scheme plans except the Essential Smart, Essential Dynamic Smart and the KeyCare plans.

About some of the terms we use in this document

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

TERMINOLOGY	DESCRIPTION
Cover	Cover refers to the benefits you have access to and how we pay for these healthcare services such as consultations, medicine and hospitals, on your health plan.
Discovery Health Rate (DHR)	This is a rate we pay for healthcare services from hospitals, pharmacies, healthcare professionals and other providers of relevant health services.
Find a healthcare provider	Find a healthcare provider is a medical and provider search tool which is available on the Discovery app and website.
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 spinal network 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 Spinal Conservative Care Network healthcare professionals for a full assessment for enrolment on the programme.

Steps to follow

1. Consultation and assessment with a Spinal Care Network Orthopaedic surgeon, a Neurosurgeon that is on the Spinal Network, or a Spinal Network General Practitioner (GP).
 - a. Please note that this Spinal network is separate from normal plan-type related networks, so please ensure you locate the appropriate **Spinal network** healthcare professional.
2. During this consultation you will need to provide the Spinal network surgeon or GP with access to your health profile on our electronic health platform called HealthID
3. Once the assessment has been completed by the Spinal network surgeon or GP, and captured on HealthID, if the first stage clinical entry criteria (CEC) is met, a referral to a Spinal Conservative Care Network physiotherapist or chiropractor will be generated. The feedback on whether you have met the CEC is immediate, when the Spinal network surgeon or GP submits the information on HealthID.
4. You will then need to visit the provider you have been referred to and a second, comprehensive assessment will be completed. This assessment is also captured on HealthID and should the second stage clinical entry criteria be met, you will be enrolled on the Spinal Conservative Care programme.



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 and general practitioners, 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 or general practitioner in the network.

Once you are identified as eligible for the programme, you will need to consult a chiropractor or physiotherapist in the Spinal Conservative Care Network to be assessed for enrolment onto the programme. For your chosen healthcare professional to view your medical records on HealthID you must [grant them consent to access your Electronic Health Record here](#). 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 consultations, including the assessment, with a network conservative care healthcare professional over a period of 24 weeks. These sessions can be conducted face-to-face or through the [Discovery Health app](#). You can choose to consult either a network physiotherapist or a network chiropractor for your treatment.

Your treating healthcare professional will decide what is best for you and your condition. Once enrolled we cover the consultation fees with your healthcare professional in full and cover will not affect your day-to-day benefits, where applicable. Any additional conservative healthcare services outside of the sessions approved as part of the defined basket of care, will be covered in accordance with the benefits on your chosen health plan.

How to find a Spinal network GP, Surgeon, Physiotherapist or Chiropractor in the network

To find a physiotherapist or chiropractor in the network:

1. Log on to the Discovery website:

On the Discovery website www.discovery.co.za, under Medical Aid > Find a healthcare provider > Find a doctor close to you. Type in the name or category of healthcare professional you would like to find closest to you e.g. physiotherapist or neurosurgeon etc, add 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.

To filter your results for a Spinal surgeon or GP, select Care Programmes under the search filters, and tick the box for Spinal Surgery network or Spinal GP network.

2. Log on to your Discovery Health 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 you for possible enrolment onto the programme

Your healthcare professional needs to assess you for possible enrolment onto the programme through HealthID with your consent. They also have to capture specific clinical information related to your condition 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 chosen health plan benefits.
- You must continue to see the same enrolling conservative care network provider once you have joined the programme.
- If you stop the programme, we do not pay further fees.



- 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, the conservative care programme will end.
- Members are eligible for the Spinal Conservative Care Programme only once per year, even if your condition recurs or a new area of concern arises.
- Members who have had spinal surgery in the past 12 months do not qualify for the programme.
- This programme excludes emergencies, oncology, congenital and moderate to severe trauma-related injuries. These are covered according to the benefits on your chosen health plan.



Working to care for and protect you

Our goal is to provide support for you in the times when you need it most.

How to contact us

Tel (members): 0860 99 88 77, Tel (health partners): 0860 44 55 66

Go to www.discovery.co.za to Get Help or ask a question on WhatsApp. Save this number 0860 756 756 on your phone and say "Hi" to start chatting with us 24/7.

PO Box 784262, Sandton, 2146. 1 Discovery Place, Sandton, 2196.

What to do if you have a complaint

01 | TO TAKE YOUR QUERY FURTHER:

If you have already contacted the Discovery Health Medical Scheme and feel that your query has still not been resolved, please complete our online complaints form on www.discovery.co.za. We would also love to hear from you if we have exceeded your expectations.

02 | TO CONTACT THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER:

If you are still not satisfied with the resolution of your complaint after following the process in Step 1 you are able to escalate your complaint to the Principal Officer of the Discovery Health Medical Scheme. You may lodge a query or complaint with Discovery Health Medical Scheme by completing the online form on www.discovery.co.za or by emailing principalofficer@discovery.co.za.

03 | TO LODGE A DISPUTE:

If you have received a final decision from Discovery Health Medical Scheme and want to challenge it, you may lodge a formal dispute. You can find more information of the Scheme's dispute process on the [website](#).

04 | TO CONTACT THE COUNCIL FOR MEDICAL SCHEMES:

Discovery Health Medical Scheme is regulated by the Council for Medical Schemes. You may contact the Council at any stage of the complaints process, but we encourage you to first follow the steps above to resolve your complaint before contacting the Council. Contact details for the Council for Medical Schemes: Council for Medical Schemes Complaints Unit, Block A, Eco Glades 2 Office Park, 420 Witch-Hazel Avenue, Eco Park, Centurion 0157 | complaints@medicalschemes.co.za | 0861 123 267 | www.medicalschemes.co.za.

Your privacy is important to us

We hold your privacy in the highest regard. Our unwavering commitment to protecting your personal information and ensuring the security and confidentiality of your data is clearly outlined in our Privacy Statement. You can view our latest version on www.discovery.co.za > Medical aid > About Discovery Health Medical Scheme.