

Dear Bestmed member,

COVID-19 VACCINE: AVAILABILITY, ACCESS, ADMINISTRATION AND FUNDING

On 5 January 2021, the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) released a media statement to confirm that the regulator is driving public-private sector collaborations to ensure equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccine has been identified as a Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB) by Dr Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Health. This means that the COVID-19 vaccine will be regarded as PMB level of care and needs to be funded in full by the Scheme, regardless of the member's option or available benefits, when it becomes available.

The National Department of Health (NDoH) will be responsible for single, centralised procurement of COVID-19 vaccines. Therefore, as it stands, the sourcing and distribution of the vaccine will be a national roll-out project coordinated by the NDoH. NDoH will contract with suppliers to purchase stock and will allocate vaccines to provincial health departments and the private healthcare sector.

Bestmed, as a registered medical scheme, is a health insurer and funder, and not a procurer or provider of healthcare services. Therefore, Bestmed cannot adopt an **internal** prioritisation plan based on, for example, benefit option and/or health status for granting of benefits to beneficiaries. We will abide by the NDoH's prioritisation plan for the allocation of vaccines.

Accreditation is required for private providers to administer the vaccines and Bestmed will fund the vaccination cost at any of these accredited providers. Vaccinations will be allocated to various priority groups for administration of the vaccines.

- i. Phase I – Healthcare workers: doctors, pharmacists, and allied healthcare workers on the front line are expected to start being vaccinated early February 2021.
- ii. Phase II – Essential workers, persons in congregate setting, persons older than 60 years, and persons older than 18 years with co-morbidities.
- iii. Phase III – Other persons older than 18 years.

NDoH is co-ordinating the involvement of the private healthcare Sector in the drive to achieve herd immunity for the country i.e. vaccinating around 40 million South Africans. The involvement of private healthcare sector is through the CMS and the two major industry associations namely, Health Funders Association (HFA) and Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF). Bestmed is participating in this process through the industry associations to ensure that the interests of the Scheme and members are protected.

In conclusion, Bestmed will work within guidelines set out by the NDoH and CMS to ensure that the vaccine is available to our members and accordingly be covered as a PMB.

Take care and keep safe.

Personally Yours,

Bestmed Medical Scheme