



Peace of mind at a low cost

A MediShield or Integrated Shield Plans on top of the Medisave account will help to keep your healthcare bills affordable



MDM NG'S HOSPITAL BILL	
Total charges	\$17,149.18
Length of stay (Class C ward)	8 days
Government subsidy	\$10,901.37
Total bill after subsidy	\$6,247.81
MediShield paid	\$4,423.03
Amount of Medisave claimed	\$1,824.78
Amount paid in cash	\$0.00

BY CHERYL TAY

After the government subsidy and Medisave, a third tier of protection under the public health financing scheme, MediShield, is especially useful if you are suffering from major or prolonged illnesses.

This was true for Mdm Ng when she was warded in a Class C ward at the Singapore General Hospital for eight days after she fell at home one day, when her knees gave way.

Mdm Ng, who had suffered pain in her knee for a long period before that, already has a Medisave account as she had worked as a cleaning lady before poor health forced her to retire. She also bought a MediShield plan by using her Medisave.

Her bill for the knee replacement procedure and hospital stay totalled \$17,000, which was reduced to \$6,200 because of a government subsidy.

Mdm Ng's MediShield account covered a significant part of the balance, leaving only \$1,800 to be paid from her Medisave account. This spared her from forking out any out-of-pocket cash.

The 65-year-old widow, who stays alone in a one-room flat, was glad that she overcame her initial misapprehensions about MediShield.

As Mdm Ng falls into the 61 to 65 years old

age band, her monthly premium was less than \$27 a month.

"My friends were advising me to do it, saying that it would not cost much a year and I am glad I eventually did," says Mdm Ng.

Different plans for different wards

For Mdm Goh, 53, who suffered from osteoarthritis in her leg, her bill which included a six-day stay in Class A ward at Tan Tock Seng Hospital totalled \$14,600.

Even though her stay in a non-subsidised ward did not qualify her for a government grant, Mdm Goh's Integrated Shield Plan covered \$10,400 of the bill's total amount, while her husband's Medisave made up for most of the remainder. Her out-of-pocket cash was just \$85.30.

"Never once did I fret about my medical bill, as I knew that I was adequately covered by my medical insurance," says Mdm Goh.

"Be aware of what you can afford and then select a good insurance scheme," she adds.

"Plan well and get schemes that will not overlap with one another so that you can get the right medical coverage for the class of ward you prefer."

HEALTHCARE MADE AFFORDABLE

Medisave is a compulsory individual medical savings account scheme which allows Singaporeans to pay for their medical treatment without financial difficulty. It can be used for hospitalisations, day surgeries and certain outpatient treatments.

MediShield is a low-cost catastrophic illness insurance scheme designed to help Singaporeans meet medical expenses for major illnesses or long hospital stay. Premiums for MediShield can be paid by Medisave. While MediShield is meant for those staying in Class B2 and C wards, Singaporeans who prefer Class A and B1 wards in public hospitals or private hospitals can opt for Integrated Shield Plans, offered by private insurers.

Medifund is an endowment fund set up by the Government to assist needy Singaporeans who are unable to pay for their medical expenses. Medifund acts as a safety net for needy Singaporeans who face difficulties paying for their bills despite having government subsidies, Medisave and MediShield.

Visit www.moh.gov.sg for more details.

FIVE THINGS TO NOTE

- ✓ **Understand the different schemes available.**
A good insurance scheme gives you adequate coverage. Buy a plan that is suitable for your needs. More does not mean better.
- ✓ **Know what you can afford.**
Subscribe to an insurance plan that you can afford so that it is sustainable in the long run.
- ✓ **Contribute to Medisave and use it carefully.**
Small and regular contributions help grow your Medisave account. Do regular top-ups for yourself and your loved ones.
- ✓ **Choose the right ward.**
Whether it is Class A/B1 or Class B2/C, choose one that is within your means.
- ✓ **Buy young.**
It is important to buy and stay in an insurance plan from a young age while you are still healthy so that you will not face exclusions at a later age.