

2024



PALLIATIVE CARE PROGRAMME



At Bonitas, we understand that facing a serious illness diagnosis like cancer can be scary and overwhelming. That's why we've partnered with Alignd to bring you a programme that offers extra care when you need it most. We're proud to be one of the first medical schemes in South Africa to offer our members this kind of ongoing support from diagnosis of serious cancer.

We'd like to tell you about this programme in care and support, provided by our partner, Alignd.

What exactly is this extra care programme?

We want to support you to live well while you're managing a serious illness. The Alignd Palliative Care Programme offers specialised care for anyone with serious cancer, focusing on providing relief from symptoms and stress. This could be by controlling a physical problem such as pain, or it could be by helping you with your emotional, social or spiritual needs. This programme supports you and your family.



Who will provide this care and support?

This care and support is provided by an expert team, which could include doctors, nurses and social workers. These practitioners have extra palliative care training, which means they are skilled in making patients' illness journeys easier from the moment they are diagnosed, ideally with a focus on getting them back on their feet again. What makes this team special is that they will consider and co-ordinate all aspects of your health, and not just your serious illness.

Some people feel nervous when they hear the word *palliative*, but accepting this kind of care does not mean you are dying, or that you're giving up. You won't have to change your current treatment plan or doctor either.

What does the programme include?

For those with cancer support needs, we cover an initial consultation with a palliative care trained doctor to assess your needs holistically – beyond your cancer treatment alone. Counselling for you and your family is included, as is putting in place an advance care plan or living will. As part of the Ongoing Care Plan, monthly follow-up consultations with the involved palliative care multi-disciplinary team, including the doctor, registered nurse and social worker as clinically appropriate, are also covered so you're supported throughout your treatment journey.

Should your illness be more progressed, the Alignd Palliative Care Programme offers more intensive support, including home-based palliative care, medication for symptom relief, hospital bed-hire, and limited home-based care (336 hours in total) at the end of life (this is not a replacement for frail care).



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Who has access to this programme?

If you're a Bonitas member on any option who has been diagnosed with serious cancer i.e. specific types of cancer such as pancreatic or liver cancer, or locally advanced or metastatic cancer (cancer that has spread to other organs), you'll immediately have access to the Alignd Palliative Care Programme, at no extra cost to you.

We encourage people who are living with cancer but are, on a day-to-day basis, healthy and living independently, to opt into the programme. The support can be tailored to meet the individual needs of each patient. For example, some people feel it's important to put a living will in place, but are not sure where to start. Palliative care doctors can assist you with talking about and documenting your end-of-life wishes in an advance care plan.

Must I pay extra for it?



No, the Alignd Palliative Care Programme is a comprehensive support programme available to all eligible Bonitas members, at no extra cost. With Alignd, we provide cover for our members to receive meaningful physical and emotional support from when they are diagnosed with advanced stage or metastatic cancer. The programme is also available to members with other serious illnesses who can benefit from palliative care, such as major organ failure, on a case-by-case basis and approved as a clinical exception by the Scheme. For those with more intensive care needs, the programme also covers end-of-life care.

How would I access this programme?



Your registration for oncology benefits with Bonitas includes a referral to Alignd, since you are potentially eligible. You are not automatically enrolled with Alignd – there is an enrolment process to access the extra care and support available to you. Here's what you can do:



Visit www.alignd.co.za/enquiry to start the enrolment process. You can find out more about the Alignd Palliative Care Programme on www.alignd.co.za.



Expect an Alignd Care Partner to reach out to you, and take you through the programme and enrolment process. You can ask them any questions you might have.

We wish you all the best, and hope that you will consider making use of this programme available to you.