

# CAN'T PUT A PRICE ON PAIN

## Private health insurance ensures you receive instant care when ill or in pain

**U**NLIKE many countries, Australia is blessed with a public health system which, despite its flaws, works incredibly well for its citizens.

And as private health insurance premiums are about to rise across the board from April 1, is it still worth the expense to have the liberty of choice when it comes to doctors, hospitals and avoiding lengthy waiting lists?

Financial planner James Walker-Powell from More4Life Financial Services says it is highly advisable to continue to pay for health insurance in retirement.

"What price do you want to put on pain?" Walker-Powell asks.

"If you're in the public system you can go a year or two years in pain and that's really the last thing you want when you're in retirement, or at anytime for that matter."

Walker-Powell, 52, says he recently underwent a laminectomy, which is surgery on the back part of the vertebrae to enlarge the spinal

canal, thereby releasing pressure on the spinal cord or nerves.

"I was in pain from years of surfing, rugby and the straw that broke the camel's back was jujitsu, and it was getting worse," Walker-Powell says.

"I went into a private hospital and the next day I was operated on.

"If I didn't have private health insurance, I could have waited a year or more for the surgery and that just wouldn't have worked for me."

Walker-Powell says people can reduce their health insurance expense by analysing their requirements.

"Working out the level of cover really depends on what their needs are," he says.

"If they're active and healthy, they may want to look at a policy which rewards them for that."

He says the health insurance companies will price their policies at a basic level and then charge for each add-on, usually at two to three per cent for each.

"If they can, they should get a policy which caters for them — for example each extra such as optical or dental is priced accordingly," he says. "They should look at the basics and then weigh up what add-ons are applicable to them that they need to factor in."



Financial planner and keen surfer James Walker-Powell.

Walker-Powell says premium costs can also be reduced by increasing the excess for hospital stays.

The average is around \$250, but by increasing it to \$1000, this can cut the premium.

"In the long run, a \$1000 excess for an operation which may cost \$20,000 is well worth the expense," he says.

 For more information: [privatehealth.gov.au](http://privatehealth.gov.au)

## WELLNESS TRENDS

### TELOMERES

At the ends of our chromosomes are stretches of DNA called telomeres, which protect our genetic data and hold secrets as to how we age. Each time a cell divides, the telomeres get shorter. This shortening process is associated with ageing. There are products on the market such as herbal supplement IsaGenesis, which supports the health of telomeres.

### ALTERNATIVE HEALTH

Ayurveda, herbalism, and naturopathy will increase their influence on mainstream products such as iced teas, juices and smoothies, and we'll be turning more to shots of herbal tonics and supplements to fill in the nutritional gaps.

### GUT HEALTH

Fermented foods and beverages and a focus on gut health will continue to trend upwards as more discover the importance of a healthy gut.

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