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# AQTUELL <sup>1</sup>/<sub>24</sub>

Customer news 1, February 2024



## Dear Reader,

Last autumn saw an 8.7% historic average increase in health insurance premiums. Aquilana did not escape this trend. Despite tariff adjustments well above the Swiss average, we were surprised to see further substantial membership growth. We can report a net increase of some 19,000 basic insurance holders as of 1 January 2024, bringing our total membership up to over 88,000 insurees, equivalent to growth of around 26% on the previous year.

This rapid growth also has consequences for our financial budget: a temporary decline in the solvency ratio and higher risk compensation payments bring significant financial challenges. Despite the anticipated negative annual financial statements for 2023 and 2024, Aquilana will be able to cope with this. However, to offset the financial implications, we will be obliged to correct our basic insurance tariffs by a suitable amount, beginning next year. We are confident that this will assure sustainable financial stability.

Our staff proved their dedication in another exceptionally busy autumn. We owe the entire Aquilana team a sincere debt of gratitude for their achievements! Also in the new year, we remain steadfastly by our customers' side to provide them with the best possible insurance solutions and high-quality service.

I extend a cordial invitation to you to attend this year's ordinary Annual General Meeting on Friday, 24 May 2024, at the "Trafo" Congress Centre in Baden. We are pleased to inform you about our activities in the past year and look forward to an exchange of views.

In this edition of **AQTUELL** we give you further important information and discuss the topics mentioned above. I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter!

Best wishes,

**Werner Stoller**  
Chief Executive Officer

### How to reach us

Our customer service answers your questions on **+41 56 203 44 22** (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.) or by email at [kundendienst@aquilana.ch](mailto:kundendienst@aquilana.ch). Or use the message function on our customer portal at [www.myaquilana.ch](http://www.myaquilana.ch).

Follow us:



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## 131st Annual General Meeting of Aquilana Insurance – we look forward to your attendance!

This year's ordinary AGM will be held on Friday, 24 May 2024, at 5 p.m. (doors open at 4.30 p.m.) at the "Trafo" Congress Centre in Baden. The agenda is set out on the enclosed invitation card.

Our Annual Report for 2023 will be available from mid-March 2024 to give you comprehensive and clear information about our corporate developments and Aquilana's financial situation.

You may register to attend the AGM by 24 April 2024 at the latest (statutory closing date) and use the stamped addressed reply coupon in the invitation card, also to order the Annual Report. Alternatively, you can do so easily and conveniently online at [www.aquilana.ch](http://www.aquilana.ch).



Register online with the QR code to attend the AGM.

**Important note:** if, after registering for the AGM, you decide not to attend the dinner, please let us know as soon as possible by email to [info@aquilana.ch](mailto:info@aquilana.ch) or by calling us on 056 203 44 44. This will be a great help as it permits better event planning and prevents unnecessary food waste.

## Digital Insurance Experience 2023 – another award for Aquilana



We are pleased to inform you that Aquilana has again been recognised among the top performers in 2023 in the IFZ Digital Insurance Experience study. The results of the second study by IFZ, Institut für Finanzdienstleistungen Zug, an Institute of Lucerne University, in cooperation with Finnoconsult and Adnovum, were published at the end of November 2023. The study gives an exclusive insight into the quality of Swiss insurers' online presence (private and healthcare insurers).

Aquilana counts among the top 15 of the 46 insurers that were studied. Better still, in the Website category, Aquilana emerged as the winner, achieving the highest number of points for the five criteria that were reviewed. Aquilana's Internet presence is typified by a clear and convincing user interface which benefits from an excellent combination of design, navigation and emotional appeal.

In the Online Distribution category, Aquilana ranks in third place. Our clear and transparent premium calculator, particularly good descriptions and detailed as well as readily understandable explanations of our terms and conditions of insurance are prominent features.

Aquilana also figures among the top-ranking performers in the Customer Loyalty, Mobile Apps, Online Services and Cyber Security categories.





# Bright delight

## Light and its impact on our well-being

**February, the final month of winter. Still some time to go before we no longer have to get up in the dark and then see street lighting switched on in the afternoon already. Cold, mist, a grey sky and above all winter darkness can be disagreeable and prejudicial to our sense of well-being. Here we explain why this is so and what you can do about it.**

### Light and our circadian rhythm

Daylight, i.e. sunlight filtered through the earth's atmosphere, is the principal source of light for life on earth. Our eye is able to capture light in the 1 to over 100,000 lux range. The lower end of this scale marks the transition to night vision in which we cannot perceive colours. 100,000 lux is equivalent to the intensity of light on a cloudless summer day.

Daylight contains light with different electromagnetic wavelengths radiated by the sun. The spectrum of light which corresponds to the colours of the rainbow extends from short wavelengths (blue shades) to longer ones (red shades), together creating the white light that we perceive in the daytime. As the day advances, daylight intensity changes with the angle of incidence of sunlight on the earth, from dawn through midday until sundown.

Daylight influences the human metabolism just as it affects the animal and vegetable world. Our circadian rhythm is also guided by daylight. It controls not only our sleeping and waking cycle, but also many biological processes, such as body temperature, hormone production and metabolic activity. If this rhythm is disturbed by the

lack of daylight, sleep disorders, mood swings and health problems are liable to occur.

### Light and mood

Modern life, especially in the urban environment, is played out mostly indoors with little reference to daylight – especially in winter and in bad weather. From our apartment we take a lift down to the underground car park, get into our car and at best only walk the short distance from a parking space to our destination. In winter, the use of public transport does not significantly increase our dose of daylight if we leave home in the dark and return at night: “With a persistently low light intensity, more of the sleep hormone melatonin is secreted, not just by night but also in the daytime”, Prof. Dr. Dr. Matthias J. Müller, Medical Director and Chief Medical Officer of the Oberberg Group, tells us. “If secretion is not suppressed by intense light, an excessive concentration of melatonin is present in the daytime. Human beings react with a loss of drive and with depression.” A high level of melatonin also affects the production of happiness hormones, as Prof. Müller explains: “In order to produce melatonin, more tryptophan, an amino acid, is used, leaving less still available to form the neurotransmitter serotonin. The brain then lacks sufficient serotonin that is conducive to mental balance and a positive mood; this can cause fatigue and irritability.”

The dark season of the year can be prejudicial to our mood and may even cause winter depression, known technically as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). The

term winter depression is used when the illness phases recur repeatedly and fade again in the summer half of the year. Sufferers often already feel downcast in the late autumn with a loss of energy and drive and would prefer to stay in bed all day long. Unlike non-seasonal affective disorders, winter depression often brings a craving for carbohydrates that tends to be satisfied by eating sweets. Put simply, the body consumes sugar in an attempt to compensate lower happiness hormone production due to the lack of light.

## A ray of light

Good news: even a little daylight can have a positive impact.

### Go outside

Even when the sky is overcast, go outside regularly for between thirty minutes and one hour; for example, use your lunch break for a walk or dress warmly and sit out on the balcony with a cup of tea and the newspaper – and get a good dose of light.

### Be active

Keep moving! Go for a brisk walk, play tag with your children, get on your bicycle or go out jogging. By doing so, you will boost your metabolism and happiness hormone production.

### Light shower

If you are unable to go outside and become more active or if this is still not enough, light therapy can help. The bright light emitted by a light shower helps to restore a normal circadian rhythm and boosts your serotonin level. Your mood will often already be improved after one to two weeks. Light therapy can also be a preventive measure. Portable table lights with an intensity of between 2,500 and 10,000 lux can be procured for daily use in the winter months. Ideally, the treatment should not be taken too late in the day; otherwise you may find it harder to go to sleep. The treatment may last for up to two hours and, like the minimum distance to be respected from the light, depends on the particular model. If you are suffering from SAD, Aquilana will contribute up to CHF 300 to the cost of purchasing a suitable lamp for medically prescribed light therapy. The cost is covered by your basic insurance (less your own statutory contribution). Consult your doctor before taking light therapy, especially if you are suffering from health conditions such as eye problems or diabetes.

“If your daily life is seriously impaired, you should seek professional help soon”, says Prof. Dr. med. Katharina Stegmayer, Deputy Director of the University Clinic for Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University Psychiatric

Services Bern (UPD). “That will enable us to rule out other causes such as hypothyroidism and determine whether you are indeed suffering from seasonal depression.”

## Light and vitamin D

The body also needs daylight to produce vitamin D. A good supply of vitamin D makes for better concentration, a balanced mood and helps to maintain a properly functioning immune system. Better still: “Vitamin D supports the calcium metabolism and strengthens the bones. It also has a direct effect on the muscles and so reduces the risk of falls. Some 50% of the overall population and 80% of elderly patients with a fractured hip suffer from vitamin D deficiency”, according to the Zurich University Hospital’s website. “At the age of 65 one in three persons falls at least once a year. By the ninth decade of life, one in three women and one in six men have already suffered a hip fracture. Vitamin D has a proven potential of assisting the ageing process without falls and fractures; what is more, it does so at low cost and requires only simple handling.”

To assure an adequate supply of vitamin D, the fact sheet on vitamin D published by the Swiss Office of Public Health says that all we need in Switzerland is up to half an hour’s sunlight on a summer morning or afternoon and as much as one hour in the spring and autumn. Vitamin D is of course produced faster in the midday sun, but there is then a greater risk of sunburn. Persons with a light skin are particularly susceptible, especially as sun cream obstructs vitamin D formation. From late autumn until early spring, the sun’s radiation is too weak in our latitudes to permit sufficient vitamin D formation through the skin. As we only absorb a small amount of vitamin D in our diet, it may make sense, especially for older persons, to take tablets or drops. You should seek personal advice about the recommended dose.

## Product test

Are you planning to acquire a daylight lamp? Some time ago, the Swiss tv programme for consumer information *Kassensturz* tested daylight lamps and ranked three as good.



Scan the QR code for further information and the full report (in German).

## Membership churn as of 1 January 2024

After substantially higher premiums for 2023, costs continued to rise relentlessly last year; that brought another steep increase in health insurance premiums for 2024. 1 January 2024 saw a historic average Switzerland-wide 8.7% premium increase, accompanied by another significant churn of insurees, as had been the case in 2023 already. Despite tariff adjustments of up to 12% for basic insurance (tariff base for an adult aged over 26 with an annual excess of CHF 300 and accident cover), Aquilana was not immune to changes in customer behaviour. Below, we take a look at the further strong customer growth experienced by Aquilana.

In the course of the year, Aquilana already reported some 2,000 new basic insurance holders; their number had risen to 72,000 on 31 December 2023. The change in numbers within the year is attributable mainly to asylum seekers, persons arriving from abroad and births.

On 1 January 2024, a total of some 20,000 persons transferred their basic insurance to Aquilana (the figure for the previous year was 25,400). We reported growth primarily in the canton of Aargau (+14,800), followed by the canton of Bern (+1,400). We also gained new members in the canton of Vaud (+280) and in that of Zurich (+80). Numbers remained stable in the canton of Ticino. We now have more than 58,000 basic insurance holders in the canton of Aargau, equivalent to two-thirds of our overall membership. Leaving aside children (aged 0–18), our new customers are spread satisfactorily across all age groups. 80% of new customers opted for the CASAMED general practitioner model, while 17% chose the SMARTMED digital basic insurance model. With around 4,000 departures, the exit rate is in the order of 6%. As of 1 January 2024, the total number of basic insurance holders stood at around 88,000, equivalent to growth of some 26% against the previous year.

Despite another very busy autumn, the dedication shown by our staff with external support enabled us to maintain customer satisfaction on the whole. We apologise for any delays and thank you for your forbearance.

As an Aquilana customer you can continue to rely on the best possible insurance solutions and high-quality advice and service. We look forward to another year of confidence and cooperation.

## Outlook: growth versus financial hurdles

We wish to take this opportunity to inform you of the latest trends and challenges which our business is experiencing because of its further exceptional growth.

To manage this growth, we will be adding around six persons to our workforce so as to make sure that we can continue to provide timely service meeting our accustomed quality standard in future. In the light of the latest findings, our administrative cost budget for 2024 has also been reviewed.

In the years 2016 to 2021, the number of our basic insurance holders fell, but remained stable overall at just under 40,000. As of 1 January 2021, there were around 38,400 insurees and the equivalent number was in the order of 39,200 on 1 January 2022. However, the last few years have brought unprecedented growth. As of 1 January 2024, we again reported exceptional growth on the previous year, with the number of basic insurance holders now standing at over 88,000.

In recent years, Aquilana has always been able to report excellent financial numbers in the KVG and VVG sectors. However, strong growth also brings financial challenges.

In the light of experience of recent years and the politicians' and supervisory authority's clear expectations, Aquilana deliberately decided to impose moderate premium increases in several cantons as of 1 January 2023. In retrospect, our premium adjustments were sometimes even lower than the average charged by many competitors, leaving our annual financial statements for 2022 and 2023 in the red.

Strong growth achieved with the arrival of many new customers has substantially reduced Aquilana's solvency ratio; because of the low level of reserves, this is resulting in a temporary reduction of our financial resources. Along with the need for provisions, this is accompanied by higher risk compensation payments. That is why our financial statements for both 2023 and 2024 will be negative. Aquilana will be able to cope with this shortfall, but will need to remain alert to the key financial numbers and secure liquidity at all times.

This essentially welcome trend in our inventory of insurees will, however, have a decisive influence on budgeting for the next tariff round as of 1 January 2025 and will require higher tariffs. This is the only way for us to ensure that our reserves are increased and our solvency ratio improved.

## myAquilana app and customer portal: update in preparation

In the last edition of our **AQTUELL** customer news we pointed out that myAquilana was to undergo a further update by the end of 2023 in order to improve user-friendliness in compliance with iOS and Android standards. Because of some technical challenges, the planned update could not be completed on schedule. The innovations are now expected to be implemented towards the end of the first quarter of 2024. Thank you for your forbearance and patience.

## Note for your 2024 tax return

As usual, in the February edition of **AQTUELL**, we are giving you some important information for your tax return.

At the end of January, we always send our insureds a detailed listing of the premiums paid in the previous year and, as the case may be, of any illness and accident costs (if accident insurance is included) that may have been billed to them and their family members. This listing for the period between 1 January and 31 December 2023 is intended to make it easier for them to complete their tax return.

Please note that invoices and refund claim documents processed after 31 December 2023 cannot be taken into account until the listing for 2024 is compiled. Thank you for your understanding.

To facilitate access, we give our customers an opportunity to receive the documents they need most often, including evidence to tax purposes, by electronic means only, using myAquilana. We therefore kindly request our customers who have already registered with myAquilana to print out the listing for their tax return whenever they need to do so.

We will of course be happy to answer further questions.



## Health tip: sleep – the silent elixir of life

We spend around one-third of our life asleep. But more and more people complain of sleep problems. That impacts their well-being and health. Restful sleep brings very special benefits.

Find out more about the importance of sleep and get valuable hints to improve the quality of your sleep. **They will help you sleep deep and soundly.**



Just scan the QR code or visit  
our landing page [www.aquilana.ch/  
schlafen](http://www.aquilana.ch/schlafen) (in German).

### Further recommendations for your health

- **Recommended reading:** *Warum wir schlafen* (Why we sleep) by Albrecht Vorster. An informative book which combines the latest state of research with everyday situations and knowledge from the animal world.
- **Podcast:** *Über Schlafen* (All about sleep) – fascinating stories and details from the realm of sleep by science journalist Ilka Knigge and sleep researcher Dr. Christine Blume.

Stay healthy and enjoy refreshing sleep!

# Do you not feel like going outside?

## These hints will make it a little easier for you

### Put on the right clothing

Banal but essential: do not freeze! Your coat and shoes in particular should be warm, wind-resistant and water-proof. Gloves, a cap and scarf are also recommended.

### Don't exaggerate

No need for a full hour every day – every minute helps. A shorter but regular walk is preferable.

### Walking and making phone calls

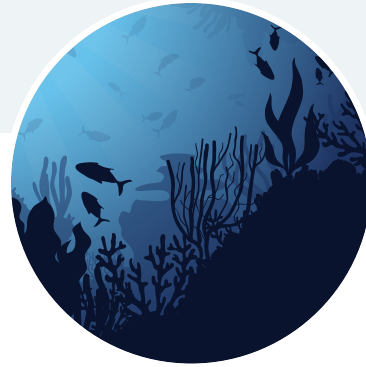
Have your friends and relatives been waiting for you to call them? Use your regular walk to make phone calls and at the same time keep up your social contacts.

### Have fun

Turn the need for more light into an opportunity for discovery, e.g. with geocoaching, a foxtrail or an audio city guide.

### Give yourself a reward

Go to a nice café, savour a cup of hot chocolate back home or watch an episode of your favourite series on the couch.



## Glow-worms and fish

Sunlight penetrates some 900 metres down into the water, after which all is dark. But life goes on. The denizens of the deep have developed a number of strategies to survive with little or no light. For instance, the colossal squid's eyes are football-sized to exploit residual light. Even in the supposedly absolute darkness of the deep, sight is still an advantage. 90% of the organisms living in the dark zone (below 1000 metres) are assumed to be bioluminescent, i.e. they generate their own light. This light often serves to attract a partner, as in the case of glow-worms, or else to catch a prey. The most prominent luminescent occupant of the ocean depths must surely be the angler fish which uses a radiant protuberance on its head to attract prey directly into its mouth.



You will find further information here  
(in German): [www.planet-wissen.de/natur/tiere\\_im\\_wasser/tiere\\_der\\_tiefsee](http://www.planet-wissen.de/natur/tiere_im_wasser/tiere_der_tiefsee)

## Polar foxes and arctic hares

In the polar regions, daylight and darkness sometimes become 30 minutes longer or shorter every day in the transitional season. The changing circumstances of light also influence the melatonin concentration in animals and give the starting signal for their fur to moult. Polar foxes, arctic hares, ermines and other animals are mostly grey or brown in summer but turn white again in winter. All kinds of species in a particular region change colour at much the same time and wear their winter plumage or winter fur for a similar length of time. The moult is not just a camouflage but also helps to regulate the temperature because colourless hair is wider, contains more chambers filled with air and therefore provides better insulation.

Enclosure: invitation to the AGM