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## Health insurance sales surge on Covid-19 fears

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Growing concerns over the Covid-19 pandemic have increasingly been driving people towards health insurance schemes.

According to initial data available with some insurers, there has been a spurt in the health insurance business in the last one month, besides huge upswing in inquiries about cover. "We have seen an increase of 15 to 20 per cent in our health numbers in the last one month. We also see good growth in the health segment, going forward," Pankaj Arora, MD and CEO, Raheja QBE General Insurance, told *BusinessLine*.

According to Amit Chhabra, Head - Health Insurance, Policybazaar.com, growth in the health insurance business in

the last 25 days has been much higher at about 30 per cent. "Apart from the fear of Covid-19, the spurt in health insurance business in March could also have come from the tax-savings season (last month of every financial year)," said Gurdeep Singh Batra, Head, Retail Underwriting, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance.

### Drivers

Digital and online offerings by insurers are coming in handy for those who wish to buy insurance during the lockdown period.

As more and more private hospitals and labs are being roped in for the fight against coronavirus, many in the age group of 25 to 55 are now looking for health cover, say insurers.

Going forward, Arogya San-



jeevini, thanks to its simplicity and affordability, is also expected to drive growth. While "it is very early to say (anything) about the response as insurers have just launched their products, or are in the process of doing so", as observed by Chhabra, insurers do see a great potential in this standard health cover policy.

According to Batra, Arogya Sanjeevini will play a crucial role in encouraging people to opt for health insurance. The company launched the product early this week.

Health business grew by 26 per cent for private insurers and 9 per cent for public sector players. Overall, health insurance business grew by 17 per cent during April to February in FY20 (first 11 months of the last financial year) compared to the same period last year, as per Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) data.

The growth could have been more for the full year, but the lockdown prevented on-field sales of insurance during the most part of last month.

During FY19, general and health insurance companies collected ₹44,873 crore as health insurance premium, registering a growth of 21.2 per cent over the previous year. For the last four years, it has been growing at more than 20 per cent per annum.