

Covid survivors buying health cover for 1st time face scrutiny

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: With nearly 1.6 crore Indians having tested positive for Covid, the number of first-time insurance buyers who are likely to face scrutiny is rising. While it is usual for insurers to inquire about pre-existing diseases before selling a health cover, Covid has made insurers turn cautious as they its long-term impact on organs is not known.

While rising incidents makes it a stronger case for people to buy health insurance before infection strikes, insurers say that often it is hospitalisation that makes people realise the need for a medical policy.

The quotes that health insurers provide for various ages are for "standard proposals" or those without pre-existing conditions. In the case of Covid, insurers treat it as a pre-existing condition and acceptance of the proposal depends on each company's un-

DUE TO UNKNOWN LONG-TERM EFFECTS

> Insurers are treating Covid as a **pre-existing condition** and acceptance of the proposal depends on each company's underwriting criteria, which ranges from presenting Covid-negative to a **6-month waiting period**



> For those who had to be hospitalised due to Covid, the acceptance will depend on **how severe the infection was, whether any organs were impacted** and whether the person had to be put on a **ventilator**

derwriting criteria. While the underwriting criteria are not made public, industry sources say that these range from requiring Covid negative certificate to asking applicants to wait between two-to-six months before onboarding them. If the patient is hospitalised and suffered damage to lungs, they could face exclusions.

"Considering the rapid spread of new variant of Covid, it is hard to say anything about the long-term effects of it. Most insurers are a bit iffy about on-boarding customers who have just recovered from Covid, as a result insurer put a cooling off period of 3-6

months after Covid detection," said Amit Chhabra, head of health insurance at Policybazaar.com.

According to Rashmi Nandargi, head of retail health insurance underwriting at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, for 80% of Covid survivors, it should not be a problem because they have mild symptoms, and they are under home quarantine. "For those who are hospitalised, the acceptance will depend on how severe the infection has been, whether any organs were impacted, whether the person has been on the ventilator," said Nandargi.