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COVID-19 VACCINE

Only a few health policies provide cover

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Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the insurance regulator and industry have helped ease the financial burden of policyholders by extending the grace period for premium payment, introduced standard health and Covid-19 health policies, and some insurers have even offered to continue cumulative bonus benefits.

However, in the case of Covid-19 vaccination expenses, only specific health policies cover vaccine expenses.

OPD cover

As Covid-19 vaccine is for those who are not infected with the virus, health insurance with OPD could cover vaccine expenses. OPD refers to procedures that do not require a stay in the hospital and are done in the outpatient department.

It covers expenses, including doctor's consultation fees, pharmacy bills, dental treatment ex-

penses and non-allopathic treatment.

Preventive care such as vaccination, too, may get covered, provided it doesn't form part of exclusions.

Many OPD plans usually exclude coverage of expenses on inoculation or vaccination (except for post-bite treatment and for medical treatment for therapeutic reasons).

According to Sanjay Datta, Chief Underwriting, Claims and Reinsurance, ICICI Lombard General Insurance: "If health policy covers OPD expenses and that include vaccinations, both for children and adults, then it will cover vaccine expenses."

Therefore, those policies that specifically offer to include vaccinations as part of their policy, would cover Covid-19 vaccine as well.

For instance, in ICICI Lombard's iHealth Plus plan, for additional premium (under wellness and preventive care clause), the policy covers routine physical



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and preventive examination, vaccinations, education, consultation, and training programmes such as nutrition tips and exercise guidelines, and pandemic preparedness in terms of providing the necessary drugs and equipment to protect the in-

jured. Similarly, Bajaj Allianz's Health Care Supreme plan, too, covers Covid-19 as part of OPD.

Rashmi Nandargi, Head, Health Retail, Underwriting, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, says: "Vaccination will be covered under OPD plans, as hospital ad-

mission is not required for vaccination purpose. We would cover for Covid vaccine under our OPD policies, provided it is prescribed by the (medical) consultant."

Home treatments

Further, since the outbreak of the virus, insurers have not only launched products to offer cover against Covid-19, but also provide cover for Covid-19 home treatments and protection equipment and kits.

Vaccination expenses, too, could be included as part of the basic cover later on.

According to Bhabatosh Mishra, Director Underwriting, Products and Claims at Max Bupa Health Insurance: "Currently, Covid vaccination is not covered under indemnity plans available in the industry. "However, in the foreseeable future, it being a critical need, we will evaluate covering it under our plans once the Covid vaccine availability and pricing comes in."