

Health Insurance to protect against health risks caused due to pollution



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Pollution - if we don't kill it, will kill us sooner than later. Pollution is real and its negative impact has already started seeping into our systems. The Lancet Commission on pollution and health reported 9 million premature deaths globally stemming from air pollution in 2015. More than 2.5 million of these deaths were in India, the most in any single country. Very recently in Delhi NCR, airborne particles and toxic chemicals created horrendous smog that choked the 19 million residents of the metropolitan area. As a result merely breathing the air was, at its worst, like smoking 50 cigarettes .in a day. Hospitals reported a 20% surge in patients with pollution-related illnesses, and doctors declared a public health emergency. This shows that pollution in India is not a mere inconvenience but a major medical hazard that may cause or aggravate respiratory and cardiovascular diseases among people, even those who are seemingly hale and hearty.

Considering the ever increasing healthcare cost further accentuated by pollution, one can't deny the growing need of health insurance in case of many illnesses, especially those that requires hospitalization. When you are young and healthy, your risk to health insurance companies would be less and hence premium would be lower. But once you catch any disease such as Diabetes or Asthma or when you get old, your premium will go up. This is why it makes sense to take up a health insurance policy at a young age.

Today, various health insurance plans are available in the market for you to choose from. While buying a plan, it is highly recommended that you check for parameters such as range of network, renewability, claim settlement process



and also coverage on various conditions such as maternity, critical illness etc. Some of the health plans cover existing diseases after 2-4 years where some have special features like AYUSH treatment, yearly check-up, and restoration of total sum insured. You, therefore, have to find an acceptable trade-off between your requirements, budget and available health insurance plans for your family.

Another important factor is to select the correct sum insured so that you are not under insured. If you are opting for Family Health Insurance Plans, where the total Sum Insured is supposed to be shared among all family members, you should normally select a higher sum insured considering more than one hospitalization event might occur in one single year. You can also select a top-up cover over your basic health insurance policy. Your basic health cover may be sufficient to pay for small illnesses, but there is always a chance it would fall short in case of a bigger medical emergency. Top-up policy becomes a life savior in such cases as it provides provide high coverage at very little cost.

5 points to ponder when considering health insurance:

1. Medical emergencies are, well, emergencies. Most diseases don't warn you before attacking. With stressful professional and personal lives, people are increasingly vulnerable to various health problems and lifestyle diseases. The earlier you buy a health insurance, the better it is in helping you mitigate attendant risks.
2. Your family too must be covered by health insurance as otherwise in case of an exigency, there are chances that all your savings might be exhausted in

medical treatment. Young families should consider buying a family floater health insurance plan which normally covers children up to the age of 25.

3. Medical expenses are not restricted to just in-hospital expense, it also includes indirect cost like travel, boarding, lodging, temporary loss of income while being hospitalized. Check the coverage of health insurance and how it helps you to cushion the impact of a sudden medical related expense.

4. Consider insurance that helps you in case you are stuck by any critical illness. Some Health insurance plans cover lifestyle diseases like cancer and other critical illnesses. These policies generally pay a lump sum if the disease is detected, thereby helping you and your family in the time of need.

5. Plan for your old age and retirement. Even if your employer has insured your health, buying an individual or a family health insurance plan is recommended. Once an employee retires, he would have nothing to cover him and getting a policy from the market at an older age is tough. Also, if you switch jobs, during the intervening period between your old and new jobs, you are forced to remain uninsured.

Health insurance is a necessity; one should start viewing it like a health investment. You may think that you will never have to use it but that should-not stop you from starting to prepare for a day when you may have to use it. Paying small premiums today may save you tomorrow from a big financial dent caused by a medical calamity. You may not be able to protect yourself from all disease but you can surely reduce the financial pain by choosing the right health insurance plan. Stay safe stay healthy.