

MONEY MATTERS

Financial advice
provided by Ivan Ahern

With over 250 plans on the market, reviewing your health cover is vital

WE ARE fast approaching the busiest time for health insurance and most members are unaware of some of the key changes to their cover. Almost 850,000 health insurance customers, some of whom are INMO members, will be receiving their renewal notices in the first three months of 2013 and they may be surprised to find most policies have increased substantially since their last renewal.

With more than 250 plans on the market, reviewing your cover has never been more important. This is especially so if you have been insured on the same plan for three years or more, as insurers have introduced a multitude of new, lower cost options.

More importantly, all insurers now operate 'annual contracts', which means that you could find yourself locked into your existing contract for a further 12 months if you don't act now. You might think that you can simply exit your contract mid-term but some of the insurers may charge you financial penalties for breach of contract! Following is some potential good news that makes reviewing your health insurance cover worthwhile:



- GloHealth has now entered the market with some very attractive options. You can personalise your cover to suit your requirements by selecting from a range of 'personalised packages' which can be added to your core hospital cover (eg. there is a 'travel insurance' and 'sports cover' package). Also, on some of their mainstream plans, children under three years-of-age are free of charge.
- Aviva Health has discounted one of its mid-range plans. This means a saving of €100 for each adult either joining or renewing during this period.
- Laya Healthcare has discounted one of its mid-range plans to give a 50% discount for all children and students joining or renewing their health insurance in January 2013 (offers ends February 20).
- Some insurers have a selection of corporate plans that include both hospital and day-to-day cover (for routine medical expenses) that might suit both your requirements and your pocket. These may not be offered to you at your renewal, but if you specifically request one of these plans by name, the insurers must offer you this cover.

Consider the costs

Consumers often think that they'll be able to bear the cost of 'routine' hospital treatment themselves should they fall ill. Given that private treatment in a public hospital will cost you approximately €1,000 per night, this will be beyond most people's means. A routine admission could easily cost €7,500-10,000 and this assumes no follow-up treatment will be required.

Even if you are admitted as a public

patient, you will be liable for the daily in-patient charge of €75 per night (10 nights maximum). This means that you could have to pay up to €750 in any one year for public hospital treatment if you dropped your health insurance cover.

If you are finding the cost of your health cover prohibitive, the good news is that all four health insurers have offerings from as little as €504 for basic adult cover (public hospitals)* or €795 for mid-range adult cover (private hospitals).** Don't cancel your cover without checking these out.

There are numerous other ways to potentially reduce your overall costs. For example, splitting your cover, availing of student rates, removing your day-to-day cover, and most importantly, being sensible with your accommodation cover. Make sure that you explore these options to ensure that you only pay what you have to for your next insurance period.

INMO members can avail of Cornmarket's free health insurance comparison service, which covers all four health insurers, VHI Healthcare, Laya Healthcare, Aviva Health and GloHealth. Tel: 01 470 8097.

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Source: www.hia.ie correct as at 01/01/13

* Essential First Plan, Laya Healthcare

** GloHealth Better Plan

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