



# Health insurers hike prices ahead of surge in post-Covid claims

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ANOTHER health insurer is raising its prices.

Experts said health insurance firms are bracing themselves for a surge in claims as more people get vaccinated and will rearrange medical treatments that were postponed.

Irish Life Health is to raise its prices by an average of 1.6pc from the start of May.

Not all plans are going up in price, but for those that are some of the increases will add €320 a year to the cost for a family of four renewing on the same plan.

Irish Life also increased premiums in October.

VHI health insurance costs are set to rise on Thursday.

Laya recently increased its consumer costs.

Consumers have been warned to expect regular price rises.

Managing director of Irish Life Health Gerard David said the price of many popular plans was not changing.

But he said that despite the impact of Covid, there is more activity in many health care settings than before the pandemic as hospitals address the backlog of patients who had treatments deferred.

"The cost of health care con-

tinues to increase, driven by rising drug costs, new treatments and the introduction of the latest medical technology."

Medical inflation and an ageing population will also continue to drive increases in the cost of health care into the future, he said.

Health insurance broker Dermot Goode of TotalHealthCover.ie said the latest price increases could add anything from €75 to €320 to a typical policy, depending on the plan held.



**Costly:** Dermot Goode warned to be wary of average figures

Members need to be wary of the average figures as some Irish Life plans will increase by more than the average 1.6pc, he added.

The Select Plus will increase by around €82 a year for a family of two adults and two children, which is a 3pc increase.

Be Fit 1 will increase by around €208 for the same family, which is closer to 5pc. The same family on the Level 2 Family Health scheme will have to pay an extra €326 a year, or 5pc.

"The health insurers appear to be bracing themselves for a

significant increase in claims volumes as more people are getting vaccinated and will rearrange medical treatment that was deferred or postponed."

Mr Goode said there are also more out-patient claims coming through as consumers are now much better at claiming their refunds on these expenses and more people move to use the online claiming services.

"We are also seeing the trend of multiple incremental increases continuing.

"You can almost expect an increase every six months now and consumers need to watch for the cumulative effect of these increases," he said.

Higher VHI prices are coming into effect on Thursday.

VHI Healthcare's plans are rising by an average of 3pc, but some plans are going up by double this figure.

Irish Life Health increased its rates by an average of 4.4pc in October.

Laya Healthcare premiums are going up by an average of 2.9pc from the start of January.

A small number of plans are increasing by more than 10pc.

Mr Goode warned consumers to expect increases of 5pc to 6pc from all insurers if they want to renew on the same cover.