

Irish Life Health to hike plans by average of 4.8%

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Irish Life Health said it was seeing increased demand for healthcare services

Irish Life Health said today the price of its health insurance plans will increase again from January 1, 2024 due to increased demand for healthcare services.

This marks its third price hike over the last 12 months and comes after increases in March and July.

The health insurance company said the planned hike will result in an average increase of 4.8% on its gross adult premium.

A small number of plans will see no price increase but the remainder will increase between 2.5% and 6%.

It said these price changes will apply for new customers from January 1 2024, and existing customers at their renewal date from January.

Irish Life Health said it was increasing prices due to the increasing demand for healthcare services including the very significant and continued increase in the volume and size of claims.

It said this has been driven largely through the private hospital network.

This trend is consistent with the country's overall health insurance sector which recently reported seeing a considerable increase in activity across all services post-pandemic.

The total level of claims paid in 2022 rose by 16.5% from the previous 12 months to €2.93 billion, exceeding claims paid in 2019, pre-pandemic.

The HIA also reported a 54% increase in outpatient, GP and other claims.

Irish Life Health managing director Ger Davis said that increasing premiums was a very difficult decision for the company and it remains focused on ensuring it minimises the hikes as much as possible.

"We are continuing to see significant increases in customers accessing care with a 25% increase since 2019 in the number of people receiving treatment in private hospitals," Ger Davis said.

"While there is some continuing inflationary pressures (staff & utility costs) for hospitals and other care providers, this is thankfully at a lower level than we have previously seen," the Irish Life Health boss added.

Vhi and Laya Healthcare have also announced price hikes during the last year.

Dermot Goode of Lockton, parent company to Totalhealthcover.ie said we are seeing some of the highest premium rate increases in ten years.

"Most plans are now up 10 to 15% on last year which will cost families anywhere from €150 - €600 extra," he explained.

"With more than one million people due to renew in the next three months, our strongest piece of advice would be that no one should simply auto-renew at renewal time.

"Each and every individual and/ or household should be shopping around or seeking independent advice on their health insurance options before they renew or buy," he said.