

Article Date	Headline / Summary	Publication
5 Jul 2024	Considering cholesterol-reducing jabs? Inform your insurer so	Moneycontrol

[Considering cholesterol-reducing jabs? Inform your insurer so](#)



Insurers may selectively cover emerging cholesterol medication. But those who have taken the injection as part of a clinical trial need to inform the insurer as their risk assessment changes.

About 15 percent of rural and 25-30 percent of urban population suffers from hypercholesterolemia – commonly referred to as high cholesterol, according to ICMR-INDIAB 2023 study.

Indians are taking to a new route to cholesterol management. While oral medications need to be taken everyday, injections, which have been found effective in reducing cholesterol by 55 percent, need to be taken only twice a year or a maximum of four times a year, based on the selected product.

About 15 percent of rural and 25-30 percent of urban population suffers from hypercholesterolemia – commonly referred to as high cholesterol, according to the ICMR-INDIAB 2023 study. Management of this disease among Indians was initially based on trials conducted on a western population. But of late major clinical trials of lipid lowering drugs are being conducted on the Indian population.

While it may look like a normal medicine being taken in a new form, these injections cause changes in gene sequence. They are also very expensive and can cost as much as Rs 1.25 lakh per dose.

That begs the question: Will your health insurance policy compensate? The answer is not as straightforward as you’d hope.

Moneycontrol checked with general insurance companies to find out if health insurance policies compensate policyholders for the expensive injections.

Critical information to consider here is whether the line of treatment you have opted for is approved by the authorities or not. “Advanced medical treatments approved by FDA and other approved medical authorities in our country are usually covered by health insurers. However, experimental treatments are typically excluded under health insurance plans,” says Deepthy Nandakumar, AVP – Health Claims, Digit General Insurance.

The guidelines provided by the Indian Medical Council and other regulatory bodies are studied to determine the treatment's safety, effectiveness and whether such treatments are approved by entities like the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) in India are taken into account by insurance companies.

“Whether the treatment is a medical procedure, or an innovative intervention is determined for the health insurance claims decision perspective and insurers go by the approval of competent authorities for treatments or procedures before making a decision,” Nandakumar said.

Coverage limited

If the treatment is approved then it will be covered, but the extent of coverage too would vary.

Additionally, conditions of hospitalisation would also be applicable. Health insurance policies have a condition of 24-48 hours of hospitalisation for claims to be honoured, unless one is undergoing the day-care procedures (where 24-hours hospitalisation isn't mandatory) such as cataract surgery etc as mentioned in the policy conditions.

Aashish Sethi, Head - Health SBU and Travel, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, says, “Insurance policies cover medical treatments administered during a hospital stay, particularly when a patient is admitted as an inpatient. So, it will be paid for, only in case of admission to a hospital as in-patient only. This means that if someone decides to undergo cholesterol injection treatment and receives it as part of a hospital admission, the associated costs may be eligible for insurance coverage.”

So, while you are anticipating that the injection cost may be compensated, the insurance coverage would cover only the allied hospitalisation cost and not the injection cost of Rs 1.25 lakh.

Understand the coverage

Don't just blindly head to the hospital to procure these cholesterol reducing injections.

Policyholders need to thoroughly review their insurance policy and check for specific details for coverage of cholesterol injections with both the healthcare provider and the insurance company.

Sethi adds, “It is imperative that all relevant details pertaining to the coverage, including specific treatments and procedures, are transparently discussed. This pre-sale clarification helps in establishing a mutual understanding, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings or disputes during the claims process.”

Renewals

But, if you want to avoid potential claim denials in the future, then do inform the insurance company about the alteration in the course of medication for cholesterol lowering.

This is because a material information change has occurred in the risk coverage contract between you and the insurance company.

“If an individual has taken an injection as part of a vaccine or medicine trial, it's crucial to inform the insurance company during policy renewals. This is because any claims related to conditions arising from clinical trials are typically not covered under a health insurance policy,” suggests Sethi.

A disclosure ensures transparency and helps individuals understand the limitations of their coverage.