

Covid-19 testing, treatment is now covered under Ayushman Bharat scheme

Last Updated at April 4, 2020

- **Ayushman Bharat is considered to be the world's largest state-sponsored health insurance scheme covering over 500 million**
- **The decision is expected to attract more private players for providing testing and treatment for covid-19**

MUMBAI:

The ministry of health and family welfare has put testing and treatment of covid-19 pandemic under Ayushman Bharat–Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), considered to be the world's largest state-sponsored health insurance scheme.

“The testing and treatment of covid-19 is already available for free in the public facilities. Now, more than 50 crore citizens, eligible under the government of India's health assurance scheme will be able to avail free testing through private labs and treatment for COVID-19 in empaneled hospitals,” a statement by National Health Authority (NHA) and health ministry said. NHA is the apex government agency responsible for the design, roll-out, implementation and management of AB-PMJAY across the country.

“The empaneled hospitals can use their own authorized testing facilities or tie up with an authorized testing facility. These tests would be carried out as per the protocol set by Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) and by private labs approved or registered by ICMR. Similarly, the treatment of COVID-19 by private hospitals will be covered under AB-PMJAY,” the statement said.

The decision is expected to attract more private players for providing testing and treatment for covid-19. Active private sector involvement will be critical in case there is a surge in the number of covid-19 patients needing care.

The development comes after a number of private health insurers, including ICICI Lombard Health Insurance and Star Health and Allied Insurance, have started providing dedicated covid-19 health insurance policies to their customers.

The deadly disease which erupted in China in December has so far claimed 75 lives and affected 3,072 people in India. The pandemic has killed 59,884 and affected 1.13 million people across 181 countries in this period.

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Resource: Live Mint, 04 April 2020

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