



# 7 Things you should know before buying health insurance in Thailand

## FACTS IN BRIEF

- 1. Your choice of hospital will generally determine the level of coverage you need**
- 2. Relying on the government hospital system is not an option**
- 3. The earlier you start insurance the more options available to you**
- 4. The cost of insurance can be expected to rise each year**
- 5. Pre-existing illness or chronic disease are generally not covered**
- 6. The difference between Offshore versus Local Thai Insurance**
- 7. The cost of health insurance can be dramatically reduced by going without certain benefits.**

## YOUR CHOICE OF HOSPITAL

The level of coverage you buy will largely be determined by the hospital you would use in the event of illness or accident. There are generally 3 levels in terms of cost when it comes to Private Hospitals in Thailand. Bangkok Nursing Home and Bumrungrad International Hospital are generally considered the most expensive hospitals and would require insurance with a high upper limit and higher level of daily bed rate. Next is the Bangkok International Hospital and Samitivej Hospital group which still require a high level of insurance coverage. Bangkok Christian Hospital, Sukhumvit Hospital, Bangkok General Hospital in provincial areas (e.g. Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Hua Hin, Koh Samui), Saint Louis Hospital, Yanhee Hospital and the Phyathai Hospital group of hospitals are still very good hospitals with English speaking staff yet generally have lower daily bed rates. They are a great option for customers on a budget or seeking a lower level of insurance coverage.

## THE GOVERNMENT HEALTH SYSTEM

Having health insurance in Thailand is vital. If you work here you will be provided with a social security card which allows free treatment at government hospitals which sounds good on the surface. However, the reality is long queues, limited medication (some patented, more recent drugs might not be available) and rushed doctor visits (doctors commonly see 80 to 100 patients in an 8 hour day). Also because you're in Thailand you're likely to be on a motorcycle at some stage and the cost of accidents can be financially crippling. It is important to have at least a basic level of medical and accident insurance. Going without is not an option. Not just for your sake but also for your immediate family who will feel obligated to help pay the bill should you land up in hospital.



## THE EARLIER YOU START

It is best if you can start insurance before you are sixty years of age. Insurance is not only cheaper but you will be covered for any illness that flairs up again from when you were covered in those earlier years. You are also much better placed to take advantage of discounts for the years where you have no claims. Only a small number of health insurance companies offer insurance to new customers over 60 years of age and even less over 70 years. If you start before 60 years of age most insurance companies will continue your insurance for life.

## Pre-existing illness or chronic disease

Most insurance companies do not cover pre-existing illness (an illness you had when you first applied) or chronic diseases (a recurring condition like asthma). In order to cover treatment for these conditions insurance companies would need to raise rates to very high levels or lose money. Therefore conditions like hypertension or diabetes which a publicly funded hospital might provide free treatment for in Europe are not covered by private insurance companies in Thailand or private insurance companies in other parts of the world.

# THE COST OF MEDICAL INSURANCE EACH YEAR

Most insurance companies base their pricing on your age group and the cost of medical treatment. Therefore the premium you pay each year can be expected to rise even if only by a small percentage. Also many Thai Insurance companies tend to price their policies based on 5 year age ranges. There are rumors of some insurance companies penalizing individuals who have had a high number of claims over the year but these cases are rare.

Usually the reason for a premium hike is because the company has reviewed the increasing cost of medical treatment for your age group or you have entered a new age bracket (say moving from the 45-49 age bracket to the 50-54 age bracket). By world standards Thailand is still one of the most highly regarded countries to seek quality treatment and the most popular destination for medical tourists in the World. The cost is still significantly less than what you might pay for health insurance in the United States or Singapore.

Thailand is the most popular destination in the world for medical tourism

## Offshore vs local insurance

Offshore insurance companies generally have higher coverage limits, are more expensive and often have monthly payment options. Claims processes also are often pay first then re-imburse later. Thai Insurance companies on the other hand generally have lower coverage limits, are generally less expensive and require payment on an annual basis. Claims are generally settled by direct billing. Disputed claims with local insurance companies can be taken directly to the office of insurance commission which provides a realistic chance of resolving a claim. However, this option is not available if you have insurance with an offshore insurance company so settling a disputed claim can prove somewhat more difficult.

## REDUCING YOUR PREMIUM

The cost of plans compared to the benefits offered is generally fairly similar across insurance companies. The difference in cost is generally about the benefits you are prepared to go without rather than a significantly better deal being offered by one insurance company compared to another. Not having things like optical, dental or out-patient coverage can reduce the amount you pay significantly. You can often also dramatically lower the cost of your insurance by taking a deductible if your insurance company offers it (i.e. if you agree to pay for the first 500 dollars of treatment expenses each year yourself).

## Thai Expat Club

Contact Thai Expat Club today and let us help you with your health insurance requirements. Tel. 089-897-9437

or visit our website: <https://thaiexpathealth.com>

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<https://www.karstenaichholz.com/health/thailand-health-insurance/>

<https://www.thaimedicalvacation.com/definitive-guide-to-hospitals-in-thailand/>

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