

## Tipsheet: 13 Ways to Cut Your Healthcare Costs

- 1. Know your health insurance plan's rules. Then follow them.**

There are thousands of different health insurance plans. Always double-check if the benefits, services or providers you need are covered under your plan before you receive treatment. Remember, if you don't follow the rules, your insurer can deny your claim and you can get stuck with the bill.
- 2. Pick a health insurance plan that gives you the most bang for your buck.**

Don't automatically select the cheapest plan. Weigh the value of your health versus price. If you're young and healthy, you might want to go with lower premiums and higher co-pays. If you're older or have a chronic health condition, or have young children frequently see the doctor, you're probably better off with higher premiums and lower co-pays.
- 3. Coordinate your family's health insurance plans.**

Dual coverage can be expensive. If both you and your spouse/partner have your own policy, make sure you understand how the benefits in each plan will coordinate with the other.
- 4. Plan ahead for emergencies.**

Write down the following information and keep handy before an emergency arises: Where the hospital(s) in my network are located, what doctors' offices are open after-hours/weekends and the co-pay(s) for non-regular office hour visits, which ambulance services are covered by your plan under what circumstances.
- 5. Cut your pharmacy costs.**

Most plans have a three-tier co-payment system for prescription drugs. The lowest tier is cheapest and includes generic drugs. The middle tier consists of drugs your insurer considers "cost effective" and the top tier includes the most expensive brand-name drugs. You can cut costs \$10-\$40 per prescription by asking your doctor to prescribe drugs in the first two tiers.

You can also split pills to save money. If deemed medically appropriate by your doctor, you can for example, if you need 50 mg of a pill per day, you can split a 100 mg pill over two days. Remember, pill-splitting is not appropriate for all medications and can be dangerous in certain situations. Always check with your doctor first.
- 6. Take advantage of tax breaks.**

Healthcare spending accounts offered through employers, like FSAs (flexible spending accounts), offer you a way to pay for certain out-of-pocket health care/purchases or dependent care on a pre-tax basis. Dental and vision care count as reimbursable, so don't forget to save your receipts.
- 7. Quit smoking.**

Healthcare and life insurance costs are about one-third higher for smokers versus non-smokers.
- 8. Lose weight.**

Being obese adds \$395 a year to your average \$1,500 annual healthcare costs. This is higher than smoking (\$230 addition), aging 20 years (\$225 addition) and problem drinking (\$150). One in three Americans is overweight and one in five is obese.
- 9. Exercise more.**

Exercing not only improves your health, it saves you money when you purchase life insurance because healthy people live longer. Longer life expectancies mean better life insurance rates. And many studies have shown it's never too late to start exercising and even small improvements in your fitness level can improve your health.
- 10. Seek out free of low-cost health screenings, check-ups and services.**

Find out if your HMO offers free blood pressure checks, low-cost flu vaccines, nutrition/dieting/physical fitness classes. Take advantage of these lifestyle programs to stay healthy.



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11. **Raise your deductible or co-payment.**

Whenever possible and financially practical, lower your monthly health insurance premium by raising your deductible or co-payment. But make sure you've saved money to cover the deductible.

12. **Haggle with your doctor.**

It's nothing new—you can negotiate a lower price on elective procedures, like laser vision surgery or psychotherapy. Establish the price you believe is reasonable and discuss with your doctor.

13. **Search for a subsidy.**

If you are uninsured, disabled, have low-income or are a veteran, see if you qualify for free or low-cost health insurance through a state or federal program like Medicaid or Medicare. And if you have children, they might also be eligible for free or low-cost coverage.

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Source: United Way 2-1-1™/The Twin Cities Beehive.com, insure.com

Resources: [United Way 2-1-1™](#) is a free and confidential, 24-hour information/referral line that can connect you to helpful programs and resources in our community. Just 2-1-1 or 651-291-0211.