



TALKING ABOUT COST: Don't Let Medication Expenses Cut into Your Treatment.

Shocked by the high cost of your medications? Do you worry about how you'll pay for them? Well, you are not alone. The majority of older adults are concerned about keeping up with the cost of their medical treatment. Unfortunately, as the cost of medications continues to rise, paying for them can be a major financial drain.

Medication costs can be especially high for people who do not have health insurance or prescription drug coverage. But even if you have a Medicare drug plan, you are not in the clear. After you and your Medicare drug plan spend a certain amount of money on medications, you enter what is called "the donut hole," which means that you must pay 100% of your drug costs until you reach a yearly limit. Improvements to the Medicare program will reduce this gap in coverage in the coming years, but for now it can create a serious financial burden for many people.

If medication costs are a problem, skipping doses (tablet/pill splitting) or not filling your prescriptions in the first place are not the answer. Doing so can make you sicker. Take steps to reduce costs now—so expenses don't cut into your treatment. Speak up, shop around and find programs that can help you save money.

Speak Up

- **Talk to your doctor and pharmacist about reducing costs.** Don't be embarrassed—everyone wants to save money! Your healthcare professional(s) may be able to find ways to help you reduce costs or switch you to a less expensive treatment option.

You can also research your medications by visiting the [Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs](#) website. If you think you've found a way to save money on your treatment, talk to your healthcare professionals about it before you make any changes.

- **Ask about generics.** Many medications are available in a generic version, which has the same purpose and quality of the brand-name version, but are generally less expensive. Also look for generic or store-branded versions of the over-the-counter medications you are taking.
- **Ask for a senior citizen discount.** Your pharmacy or health insurance company may offer special discounts for seniors or people with limited income.
- **Find out if free samples are available.** Your doctor may have medication samples you can take before filling a prescription. Samples are especially useful if you are starting a new medication because they allow you to see whether the drug works for you or if you have unmanageable side effects.

Shop Around

- **Compare prices.** You may want to compare prices and cost-saving benefits at several different pharmacies. Even within the same pharmacy, comparing brand names and generic options could help you save a lot of money. Once you find a pharmacy you like, try to use it for all your medications. That way, your pharmacist can help you keep track of all your medications and watch for potential harmful drug interactions.

Find out if the pharmacy has coupons, a mail-order option or special discount programs that you can take advantage of.

- **Contact your insurance company.** If you have Medicare or supplemental health insurance, call the customer service center to ask how you can reduce out-of-pocket costs for your specific medications. Find out if you're eligible for any discount programs or a mail-order pharmacy option.

Find Programs to Help You Save Money

There are several drug-assistance programs to help older people reduce medication costs or even pay the full amount for medications.

Use the resources below to find the ones that are right for you. Note that some organizations will ask for information about your income, health conditions and health insurance situation to determine if you're eligible for assistance. You should only provide this information to organizations you trust—ask your healthcare professionals or caregivers for help if you're unsure.

- **Prescription assistance programs.** Drug companies, healthcare professionals and community programs may be able to help you get drugs at low or no cost. Learn more about prescription assistance programs [here](#).

These organizations can help you find programs you might be eligible for:

[NeedyMeds](#)

[Partnership for Prescription Assistance](#)

[Patient Advocate Foundation Co-Pay Relief](#)

- **State and local programs.** Each state has a State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) that provides one-on-one counseling for people on Medicare. SHIP counselors can help you find money-saving resources or drug assistance programs in your state.

[Contact Your State's Health Insurance Assistance Program](#)

- **Discount enrollment programs.** Some programs issue discount cards to help older people save money on medications. Some of these programs charge an annual fee, but if the fee is low enough, the discount card can quickly pay for itself in savings. Look for discount programs available through your state, county, pharmacy or membership organizations. The [AARP Prescription Discount Program](#) is one example.

Put Your Health First

Never skip doses or reduce the amount of medication you take in order to save on medication costs. Failing to follow your doctor's instructions can cause your health conditions to get worse, land you in the hospital or possibly cost you your life. It's not worth the risk—work with your healthcare professionals, caregiver, insurance company or community organizations to help you manage your expenses and stay healthy.

Buying Medications Online? Be Safe!

The Internet can be a great resource for finding discount drugs. But beware of fraudulent websites that may put your privacy and health in jeopardy. Some websites sell medicines that are fake, expired, with harmful ingredients or generally unsafe.

Use this [Guide to Buying Prescription Medicine Online](#) from the FDA and NCPIE for tips on purchasing medications online.

You can also find trustworthy online pharmacies through the [Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites](#) database from the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.