

10 ways to control health care costs

Everybody can play a role in controlling the rising cost of health care. In fact, there are many things you can do to reduce how much you spend on health care now and in the future.

1 See preferred doctors

Most health plans let you see any doctor you want. But you can save a bundle by seeing doctors that are part of your plan's preferred network of health care providers. Going to a preferred, in-network doctor usually saves you 20 percent to 30 percent or even more off your bill.

2 Go generic

Generic drugs are the same as other medications, just without the brand name. The biggest difference is the price. Generics usually cost you 30 percent to 70 percent less than brand names.

3 Practice prevention

Preventive care includes things like physical exams, vaccines, blood tests and cancer screenings. These services can prevent you from getting sick or detect a health issue before it gets serious. Check your health plan to see if preventive care is covered in full or at discounted rates.

4 Get online

It makes sense to find out everything you can to make informed, cost-saving health care choices. That's why we offer a number of web tools to help you review your health care options, pharmacy benefits and health coverage estimates using the Internet. Visit our website at umr.com.

5 Choose the right care

There is a time and place for everything. A trip to the emergency room may be needed if you are seriously injured or ill. Consider a cheaper option, like a walk-in clinic or urgent care, if you have a minor illness or issue, such as an ear infection. It may save you time as well as money.

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6 Think long-term

Some people go to the doctor for minor reasons once they meet their yearly deductible. While that may not have an instant impact on health care costs, it is a major factor in driving up everyone's overall costs of care.

7 Eat right

A balanced diet can save you money. It keeps you healthier in the short-term and lessens the chances of developing more serious and costly medical conditions in the future.

8 Exercise

Just 30 minutes of walking or other regular exercise each day helps manage weight, stress and possibly your pocketbook. Exercise helps control and prevent high blood pressure and cholesterol, two of the major risk factors for heart disease.

9 Take care of yourself

The harmful effects of unhealthy habits, such as tobacco use and alcohol abuse, are well known in regard to health issues like cancer and heart disease. If you use tobacco products, seek help to try quitting. Practice moderation if you drink alcohol. Get help if stress or depression are an issue. You will feel better and also save a few dollars.

10 Review your EOB

Billing mistakes sometimes happen. Review your explanation of benefits (EOB) statement to make sure you are properly billed. Contact your doctor or other care provider if you suspect an incorrect charge.



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