

4 Ways To Save On Your Family's Medical Costs (Part Two)

AUGUST 2021 ISSUE

AUGUST 1, 2021

PERSONAL FINANCES

BUDGETING, SPENDING, SAVING

In [Part One](#) we discussed how you can use the new required transparency of hospital pricing to save big on medical costs, as well as how the end of surprise medical billing protects you from incurring out-of-network costs for emergency care. Below are two more methods to net huge savings on your medical expenses.

Prescription Drug Savings

Prescription drug costs now average around \$1,200 per person annually and are continuing to rise. Use the following strategies to save on prescription medications without sacrificing quality:

1. **Compare pharmacies** – The price of a prescription can vary dramatically (up to hundreds of dollars) from one pharmacy to another, so be sure to shop around at area pharmacies, including online pharmacies with a Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Site (VIPPS) accreditation. Switching pharmacies for different drugs can net huge savings. And don't forget about warehouse stores such as Costco and Sam's Club, since you don't have to be a member to rack up substantial savings on prescriptions filled there.
2. **Use discount cards** – Using your insurance isn't always the best option when paying for prescriptions. Ask the pharmacy what their cash price is for your medication without insurance. Better yet, you can save up to 85% on your prescriptions at over 35,000 pharmacies by foregoing insurance and using CareCard to compare prices and generate FREE coupons for big savings at local pharmacies. Simply go to www.carecard.co, type in your prescription drug name, and print out the coupon for your local pharmacy with the biggest savings.
3. **Other cost-saving options** – Ask your doctor for the generic drug, if available, for savings of up to 80% compared to the brand-name. If no generics are available, ask your doctor or pharmacist if there's a more affordable drug available that's a viable replacement. Also, if you must choose a brand-name drug, check the manufacturer's website for coupons and ask your doctor for free samples. Finally, realize bulk purchase savings by requesting a 90-day supply or asking for a larger dose so you can cut the medication to the desired dosage with a pill splitter.

Negotiating Medical Bills

Believe it or not, 93% of those who negotiate their medical bills have been able to reduce or eliminate it entirely, according to a recent survey by LendingTree, using these strategies:

- **Examine the bill for accuracy** – Unfortunately, almost 80% of medical bills contain errors, so request an itemized bill and compare it to the Explanation of Benefits (EOB) from your insurance carrier. Make sure you aren't billed for treatment that didn't take place or for any duplicate charges.
- **Request a discount for cash payment** – If your initial medical bill had errors, call the billing office and request a corrected statement. While you're at it, also request a discount for immediate cash payment, which often can be substantial (40-50%). Make sure all communication is documented in writing. If a billing agent has quoted you a new price over the phone, make sure to email them a summary of your discussion, and request a confirmation email in response, so you have a paper trail.
- **Review your insurance coverage** – Your insurance coverage benefits may have changed from the last time you checked your policy, so make sure you know exactly what your responsibility is.
- **Hire an advocate or professional negotiator** – If all else fails, contact a patient advocacy group or independent company to assist you in negotiating a lower bill. While they charge a fee for their services, it can be worth it. Consider contacting [Resolve](#) or [ClaimMedic](#), two national companies that are dedicated to helping you negotiate with providers.

Finally, remember to be polite. As my mother always said, you'll catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

The McGill Advisory content is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, accounting, or other professional advice.

Copyright © 2023 John K. McGill & Company, Inc.