

Money Matters

Cost-Cutting Health Insurance Tips

(NAPSA)—With the future of health reform uncertain, Americans struggling to pay doctors' bills and health insurance premiums need to take matters into their own hands. Here are five tips to help you take control of your health costs during challenging economic times.

Lock in Your Rate—When shopping for health insurance, look for plans offering rate guarantee periods. Some insurers will lock in your premiums for the first one or two years, for free or for an additional monthly fee. Do the math and consider the plan benefits to see if one of these policies makes sense for you.

Negotiate Your Medical Bills—People can save as much as 30 percent by negotiating their medical bills. Whether you're currently uninsured or seeing a physician not covered by your policy, talk to your health care provider's billing department and see if you can get a discount by paying up front or creating a payment plan. If you're facing an especially high bill, you may want to work with a professional negotiator.

Think Twice About COBRA—Even if you're receiving the 65 percent federal COBRA subsidy, you may be able to save money buying coverage on your own. eHealthInsurance.com has identified more than 20 states where families can save over \$500 a year on average by purchasing their own health insurance plan.

Consider Generic-Only Drug Coverage—Find out if health insurance companies in your area offer generic-only prescription drug coverage for any of their plans. If you rarely use



A generic-only health plan may save you money on your insurance premium.

prescription drugs but don't want to go without Rx coverage, you may be able to save on your monthly premiums. Consider a prescription discount card in case you need a brand-name drug, or work with organizations such as Together Rx Access® that provide additional discounts on prescriptions.

"Split up" the Family—You may be able to save money by covering individual family members under different health insurance plans. Family members with pre-existing medical conditions should stick with their current plan, but you may be able to save money by covering healthy teenagers (for example) on their own.

Everyone's health insurance needs are different, so talk to a licensed agent before changing health insurance plans—especially if you have a pre-existing medical condition. To learn more about health insurance options, contact a licensed agent at (800) 977-8860 or go online to www.eHealthInsurance.com.