

Tips For Saving On Prescription Drugs

(NAPSA)—Good news: People are living longer, better lives, thanks a good deal to modern medicine.

Bad news: Prescription drugs are one of the fastest-growing expenses in the country, comprising up to 15 percent of health care costs.

Better news: There are ways by which seniors and others can save money on medications:

1). **Join a Medicare plan with prescription drug coverage.** There are several types available, including prescription drug plans (PDP), which cover only drugs, and Medicare Advantage plans with prescription drug coverage, which include drugs and other benefits. You can sign up for these plans three months before or after your 65th birthday without having to pay a late enrollment penalty. As with other insurance, there's generally a monthly premium and a yearly deductible. Additionally, members are responsible for co-payments and co-insurance.

2). **Know your formulary.** A formulary is a list of drugs a drug plan covers. Most prescription drugs used by people with Medicare are included on a plan's formulary, but it's important to check to be sure. To compare formularies, visit the plan formulary finder at www.medicare.gov. If a drug isn't available, make sure there's coverage for a suitable alternative.

3). **Use generic alternatives when possible.** According to Humana Pharmacy Solutions (HPS), the pharmacy arm of Humana, which manages 220 million prescriptions each year, \$25 billion could be saved annually by switching from brand-name to generic prescription drugs.

Every year, more drugs become available as generics, lowering their cost by up to 80 percent. Generics are available that treat diabetes,



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hypertension, depression and high cholesterol, to name a few conditions. Generics are rigorously tested by the FDA and are bioequivalent to their brand-name counterparts in quality, strength, purity and stability. Nevertheless, always seek your doctor's advice before switching.

4). **Take advantage of special offers.** Many stores offer deep discounts on prescription drugs. By taking advantage of these deals, seniors may delay reaching the Medicare coverage gap, where drugs aren't covered.

Members should show their insurance card when taking advantage of these deals so purchases can be tracked and any harmful interactions can be identified.

5). **Consider mail-order prescriptions.** Mail order can generally provide users with more medicine for less money. Humana offers zero co-payment preferred generics through its mail-order pharmacy, RightSourceRxSM. To take advantage of mail-order services, seniors should ask their doctors to write a 90-day prescription.

6). **When going to a pharmacy, make sure it's in network.** Going outside your plan's network may cost more.

7). **Seek help if you need it.** Seniors with limited income may qualify for help. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recommends the following:

- Look for state help. Visit www.medicare.gov/spap.asp.
- Many drug manufacturers offer assistance to people with Medicare. For a list of participating companies, visit www.medicare.gov/pap/index.asp.
- Social Security may offer help, depending on your income. For details, call (800) 772-1213 (TTY: 1-800-325-0778) or visit www.socialsecurity.gov.

"Seniors need to know that there are programs and strategies available to help them save on their drug costs," said William Fleming, PharmD., vice president of HPS.

For more information about these programs, visit www.benefitscheckup.org/humana.