



TIPS

from the Consumer Health Action Network

December 2006

How can I reduce my prescription costs?

There are lots of things you can do to help lower your drug expenses!

- Ask your doctor if there is a less expensive generic form of the drug.
- Ask if there is an over-the-counter alternative to the prescription that doesn't need a prescription.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist for sample medications.
- Find a drugstore with the cheapest prices for your medications (see below).
- Look for drug discount cards – be sure to check it out thoroughly to be sure it is worth the price
- Ask your community health center if they offer affordable drugs.
- If your drug costs are very high, look into changing your coverage – a plan with lower copays or deductibles may save you money, even if the monthly premiums are higher.
- Consider adding prescription coverage to your policy if you can, it may be worth the price.
- Ask if there are other changes you can make to avoid taking drugs. For instance, you may be able to control cholesterol, high blood pressure, and pre-diabetes with exercise, weight loss, and changing some foods you eat.
- Talk over with your doctor all the medications you are taking to see which ones you still need.
- Take your medications as prescribed.

Changing drug stores might reduce your expenses!

Different drugstores charge different prices for the same drugs; stores from the same chain may have different prices. Before you buy your medications, call all the local pharmacies to compare prices. Even small differences can add up to hundreds of dollars in a year. Pill costs can differ by as much as \$2 per pill. Online resources like CT's Pharmacy Prescription Drug Prices search engine (<http://www.dir.ct.gov/ag/DrugSearchGIS.asp>) and PharmacyChecker.com evaluate pharmacies and compare the prices that various Connecticut pharmacies charge uninsured consumers.

If you need medicine for colds, infections, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, or asthma you might want to check out discount retailers (like Wal-Mart and Target) that now offer discounted generic drug plans. Their programs offer a 30-day supply of generic drugs at commonly prescribed dosages for \$4 per prescription. Certain prescription drug coverage plans might cost you less than \$4. The \$4 per prescription price is for anyone, regardless of whether or not you have insurance, but it does not apply to prescriptions filled by mail order.

What are prescription assistance programs (PAPs)? Could they help me?

Patient prescription assistance programs are usually run by pharmaceutical companies that provide free or discounted medications to patients who are unable to afford them. It is important to note that pharmaceutical companies have different eligibility requirements. Most often, to be eligible for the programs you must get permission from your doctor and show proof of income. For some programs you are not eligible if you have health insurance or another drug benefit plan.

How can I join a prescription assistance program?

There are several programs that might be able to assist you with pharmaceutical costs. Finding one can be difficult but there are organizations to help. “Volunteers in Health Care” and “Partnership for Prescription Assistance” can provide you with information about assistance programs for which you might qualify based on your age, income, and medications. For more information on what programs are available, call us toll-free at 1-888-873-4585.

Are there special assistance programs for the elderly or for special chronic illnesses?

Yes, there are special programs that target patients with diabetes, HIV/AIDS, rare disorders, or those who are elderly. See the table below for some examples and contact information. Call us toll-free at 1-888-873-4585 for help applying.

HIV/AIDS	<u>Connecticut AIDS Drug Assistance Program (CADAP)</u> ONLINE: http://www.ct.gov/dss/site/default.asp PHONE: 1-800-233-2503
ELDERLY	<u>ConnPACE</u> ONLINE: www.connpace.com PHONE: 1-800-423-5026 <u>Citizen Prescription Drug Program</u> ONLINE: www.citizenshealth.com PHONE: 1-800-563-5479 or 1-800-214-5697
RARE DISORDERS	<u>National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD)</u> ONLINE: www.rarediseases.org PHONE: 1-800-999-6673
PEOPLE WITH DIABETES	<u>ConnPACE</u> ONLINE: www.connpace.com PHONE: 1-800-423-5026
ORGAN TRANSPLANT	<u>Conntrans Organ Transplant Recipient Program</u> ONLINE: www.dss.state.ct.us/pubs/Conntrans.pdf PHONE: 860-424-5240

What if I have insurance, but I still have trouble paying for my medications?

Most assistance programs, but not all, run by pharmaceutical companies are for uninsured patients. In fact, some programs require that you not be eligible for Medicaid. You can check with the drug company; call us toll-free at 1-888-873-4585 to find out how to check.

If you have any questions concerning reducing your prescription costs, call us toll-free at 1-888-873-4585.