



# MANAGE YOUR HEALTH CARE COSTS





# HELPING CONSUMERS MANAGE HEALTH CARE COSTS

## What's the purpose of this resource?

Many Americans have questions about how to manage their health care costs, including the cost of care, and if they can afford it. This resource will provide answers to individuals, families, and navigators who assist with coverage enrollment. While this resource is intended for those with coverage, those without coverage can also benefit.

With a better understanding of health care costs, we hope individuals and families will use their coverage and benefit from the services provided, like access to primary care and preventive services.

Some of the information in these tools has been adapted from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) *Your Money Your Goals Toolkit*. Visit [consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/your-money-your-goals/toolkit](https://consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/your-money-your-goals/toolkit) to learn more.

## What's my role as an assister?

The term assister, as used in this document, refers to Navigators, Non-Navigator assistance personnel, and certified application counselors (CACs) in Federally-facilitated Marketplaces.

Please share the tools and information in this resource with those who ask you for help, especially after enrollment. These tools can help those you serve determine the best way to manage their health care coverage and costs.

Make sure consumers are clear about your role and how you can help. You shouldn't provide advice on what consumers can and can't afford. Make it clear to consumers that you can't make financial decisions for them or provide them with tax or legal advice within your capacity as an assister.

## Where can I send consumers for additional help?

On pages 15 and 16 is a referral list template that navigators can complete to give consumers additional local resources. **This list isn't meant to be comprehensive.** You may have to contact your local community action agency, local bank/credit union, or housing agency to get a complete list of financial educators. Use the third column to add your local information.



# GETTING STARTED

## How to use this guide

This resource can be used with the [Enrollment Toolkit](#) to help as you enroll in new insurance or change your plan. It can also be used with the [My Health Coverage at-a-Glance](#) and the [Roadmap to Better Care](#) to help you better understand your health insurance and the primary care and preventive services available.

## What are the tools in this resource?

- 1. Understand your health insurance costs** . . . . . **5**  
 Defines key terms related to health insurance to clarify costs and possible savings.
- 2. Track your health insurance information** . . . . . **9**  
 This worksheet provides a place to keep track of health insurance plan information and out-of-pocket costs.
- 3. Plan for health care costs** . . . . . **10**  
 These worksheets help individuals and families track household income, spending, and estimate out-of-pocket costs. Resources to reduce costs are also included.
- 4. Pay your health insurance premium** . . . . . **14**  
 There are many ways to pay for health insurance premiums. This tool explains possible options to pay for health insurance, even without a bank account.
- 5. Resource referral list.** . . . . . **15**



# 1. UNDERSTAND YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COSTS

## Health insurance costs fall into three main buckets:

1. What you pay
2. Your spending limits
3. How you can save

Below are common terms related to health insurance costs and their definitions.

### 1. What you pay

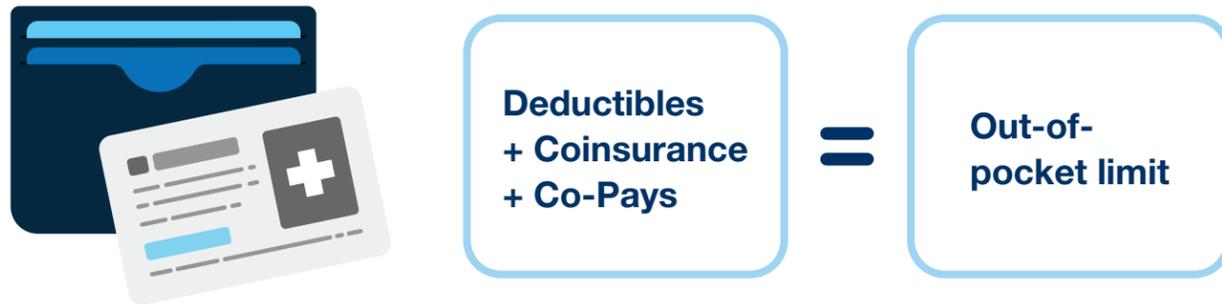
- **Premium:** The amount you pay for your health insurance every month. For example, you might pay \$100 each month for an individual plan.
- **Deductible:** The amount you pay for covered health care services before your insurance starts to pay. With a \$2,000 deductible, for example, you pay the first \$2,000 of covered services yourself. Some plans pay for certain health care services before you've met your deductible – for example, all Marketplace health plans must cover certain preventive services without charging you a copayment or coinsurance, even if you haven't yet met your yearly deductible.
- **Copayment:** A fixed amount you pay for a covered health care service (like a doctor's visit, hospital outpatient visit, or prescription drugs). This often applies after you've paid your deductible. For example, you might pay a \$15 copay for primary care visits and a \$35 copay for specialty care visits.
- **Coinsurance:** The percentage of costs of a covered health care service you pay. This often applies after you've paid your deductible. For example, if the health insurance plan's allowed amount for an office visit is \$100 and you've met your deductible, your 20% coinsurance payment would be \$20. The health insurance plan pays the rest.

#### Sample: What you pay for coinsurance

$$\begin{array}{c} \$100 \\ \text{Specialist cost} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{c} .20 \\ \text{20\% coinsurance} \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \$20 \\ \text{What you pay} \end{array}$$

## 2. Your spending limits

- **Out-of-pocket limit:** The highest amount you'll have to pay for covered essential health benefits in a plan year. After you spend this amount on deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance, your health plan pays 100% of the costs of covered essential health benefits. The out-of-pocket limit doesn't include your monthly premiums. It also doesn't include anything you may spend for services your plan doesn't cover.



## 3. How you can save

- **Premium tax credit (PTC):** This tax credit can lower health insurance costs when you enroll in a plan through a Health Insurance Marketplace. Eligibility for the premium tax credit is based on the annual household income and other eligibility information included on the Marketplace application. Your projected household income and other eligibility criteria may make you eligible to receive advance payments of the premium tax credit advanced payments of the PTC (APTC) that reduce your monthly premiums. If at the end of the year you've received more APTC than you're eligible for based on your actual annual household income and other eligibility criteria, you may have to pay back the excess when you file your annual federal tax return. If you've received less APTC than the premium tax credit you qualify for, you may receive the difference back as a credit on your federal tax return. Remember to update the Marketplace if your household income or family size changes, since this may affect your eligibility for APTC and PTC. Visit [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) to learn more about what changes to report.
- **Cost-sharing reduction (CSR):** A reduction in the amount you have to pay for deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance. In a Health Insurance Marketplace, cost-sharing reductions are often called "extra savings." Cost-sharing reductions are generally available to eligible enrollees with a household income up to 250% of the federal poverty level. If you qualify, you must enroll in a plan in the Silver category to get the extra savings. If you're a member of a federally recognized tribe, you may qualify for additional cost-sharing benefits. For more information on Silver plans, please visit: [healthcare.gov/choose-a-plan/plans-categories](https://www.healthcare.gov/choose-a-plan/plans-categories). To review eligibility information, please visit: [healthcare.gov/lower-costs](https://www.healthcare.gov/lower-costs).

- **Essential Health Benefits:** These are 10 categories of services that health insurance plans must cover under the Affordable Care Act:

1. Ambulatory patient services (outpatient care you get without being admitted to a hospital)
2. Emergency services
3. Hospitalization (like surgery and overnight stays)
4. Pregnancy, maternity, and newborn care (both before and after birth)
5. Mental health and substance use disorder services, including behavioral health treatment (this includes counseling and psychotherapy)
6. Prescription drugs
7. Rehabilitative and habilitative services and devices (services and devices to help people with injuries, disabilities, or chronic conditions gain or recover mental and physical skills)
8. Laboratory services
9. Preventive and wellness services and chronic disease management
10. Pediatric services, including oral and vision care (but adult dental and vision coverage aren't essential health benefits)

Some plans may cover additional services and all plans must include dental coverage for children. Services covered may vary based on your state's requirements.

- **Protection from Surprise Billing:** The No Surprises Act protects you from surprise out-of-network bills for emergency hospital care, visits to in-network health care facilities, and emergency air ambulance services. To learn more about the No Surprises Act or to get help with medical bills, visit [cms.gov/medical-bill-rights](https://www.cms.gov/medical-bill-rights).
- **In-network Providers:** You will generally pay less when you see providers who contract with your plan (in-network or preferred providers) instead of out-of-network providers.
- **Preventive services:** Routine health care that includes screenings, check-ups, and patient counseling to prevent illnesses, disease, or other health problems. Most health plans must cover a set of preventive services — like certain shots and screening tests — at no out-of-pocket cost to you. This includes plans available through a Health Insurance Marketplace and is true even if you haven't met your yearly [deductible](#). Note: to receive these services at no additional cost, make sure to get them from a doctor or other provider in your plan's network. To learn what preventive services are available at no out-of-pocket cost to consumers, visit [HealthCare.gov/coverage/preventive-care-benefits](https://www.healthcare.gov/coverage/preventive-care-benefits) or review the preventive services resources on the From Coverage to Care website, [cms.gov/priorities/health-equity/c2c](https://www.cms.gov/priorities/health-equity/c2c) or [healthcare.gov/preventive-care-adults/](https://www.healthcare.gov/preventive-care-adults/) for more specifics on covered services.



## 2. TRACK YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE INFORMATION

Use this worksheet to keep track of your plan's information and cost information, like your monthly premium and savings for which you qualify. Keep this information in a safe place where you can get to it when you need it.

### Health Insurance Information for Calendar Year 20\_\_

#### Health Plan Information

Plan Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Health Plan Costs Information

Monthly Premium: \_\_\_\_\_

Advance Premium Tax Credit: \_\_\_\_\_

Deductible: \_\_\_\_\_

Copayment – Primary Care: \_\_\_\_\_

Copayment – Specialist Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Copayment – Prescription Drugs: \_\_\_\_\_

Coinsurance (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Our-of-pocket limit: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. PLAN FOR HEALTH CARE COSTS

Are you concerned you cannot afford the health services you need? Knowing your income and spending habits could help you find ways to pay for health insurance costs, like monthly premiums and copayments.

**Three steps to help determine what health coverage you can afford:**



**First: Track your household income.** You'll need this information to determine your eligibility for advance payments of the premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions in the Marketplace. You should always apply to determine your eligibility.



**Next: Know your spending costs.** This will help you compare plans in the Marketplace, including each plan's out-of-pocket costs, deductibles, premiums, copayments, and coinsurance.



**Then: Shop for plans and apply for financial assistance.** Whether you're renewing your current plan, shopping for a new plan, or shopping for the first time, review plan information to be sure you chose the best for you. Preview Marketplace plans, including costs and savings, without setting up an account by visiting [healthcare.gov/see-plans/#/](https://healthcare.gov/see-plans/#/), or contact the Marketplace in your State. It only takes a few minutes, and you'll get an idea how much money to set aside each month for health care costs.



### First: Track your household income

Use the chart below to track your total monthly household income so you can compare this with your monthly spending costs. This will also help you determine if you're eligible for financial help in the Marketplace.

Income Source	Week 1 _/_/_	Week 2 _/_/_	Week 3 _/_/_	Week 4 _/_/_	Total
Job or Self-Employment	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Second job	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Unemployment Compensation	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Social Security Benefit	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Tax refund	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Other Income	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Totals monthly Income</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>

**Note:** When applying for Medicaid, the following are excluded from monthly adjusted gross income (MAGI): scholarships, awards, or fellowship grants used for education purposes and not for living expenses; certain American Indian and Alaska Native income derived from distributions, payments, ownership interests, real property usage rights, and student financial assistance, or an amount received as a lump sum is counted as income only in the month received.



## Next: Know your spending costs

Use the chart below to track your monthly spending. Then compare this to your monthly income to see how much money is available for premiums, copayments, deductibles, and other health care costs.

Category	Week 1 _ / _ / _	Week 2 _ / _ / _	Week 3 _ / _ / _	Week 4 _ / _ / _	Total
Savings	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Debt payments	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Housing and utilities	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Household supplies and expenses	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Tools of the trade/ Job-related expenses	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Groceries	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Eating out	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Pets	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Transportation	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Personal care	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Childcare and school	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Entertainment	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Court-ordered obligations	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Gifts, donations, other	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Weekly Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>



## Then: Shop for plans and apply for financial assistance

Visit [HealthCare.gov/see-plans](https://www.healthcare.gov/see-plans) to preview plans, including costs and savings, or contact your State Marketplace.

If you like, apply for financial help to see if you're eligible for advance payments of the premium tax credits or cost-sharing reductions.

For more information on cash flow budgets visit: [consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/your-money-your-goals/toolkit](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/your-money-your-goals/toolkit).



## 4. PAY YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM

You must pay your first month's premium by your health plan's due date to successfully enroll in your coverage. You must also pay your premium every month to stay covered – but each insurance company is different, so pay careful attention to their due date.

### You may be able to pay your premium one of these 4 ways:

- 1. Online:** Check your bill or call your insurance company to find out if your plan takes online payment. Your plan may also mail you online payment instructions. If you enrolled in a plan through [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov), you'll be taken to your Enroll-To-Do list. If you see a green button that says, "PAY FOR HEALTH PLAN," your insurance company accepts online payment. Select the green button and you'll be taken to your plan's payment portal where you can pay your premium.
- 2. Mail:** Your insurance company might mail you a bill with instructions for how to pay. Follow the instructions to submit your payment.
- 3. Phone:** Call your insurance company to see if you can pay over the phone using a credit card, debit card, prepaid card number, or your bank account information.
- 4. In person:** Some insurance companies have walk-in centers. Contact your insurance company to see if it has a walk-in center and for locations. Contact information can be found on the back of your insurance card, or on the company website.
- 5. Cash:** Some insurance companies allow cash payments as a special service at local pharmacies, convenience stores, or other locations. Contact your insurance company to see if and where cash is accepted. If you're only able to pay your premium using cash, you'll need to contact your insurance company to ask what type of cash payments they accept. If they don't accept cash payments, you can explore other options, like second chance bank accounts or prepaid cards.

Contact your insurance company to learn what payment options are available to you.

### Links about cash payment options, credit counseling, and consumer complaints:

- **Prepaid cards:** [consumer.gov/managing-your-money/prepaid-cards#!what-it-is](https://www.consumer.gov/managing-your-money/prepaid-cards#!what-it-is)
- **Bank Accounts:** [consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/bank-accounts](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/bank-accounts)
- **If you have a consumer complaint:** [consumerfinance.gov/complaint](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint)

**Note:** If you're not sure what type of insurance you have, or if you need to pay a premium, contact the number on your insurance card.

## 5. RESOURCE REFERRAL LIST

Topic	Possible Referral Partner	Local Contact Information
<b>Cash Flow Budgeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial education provider</li> <li>• Housing counseling agency: <a href="https://hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US">hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US</a></li> <li>• Community action agency</li> <li>• Nonprofit credit counseling organization</li> <li>• Tribal organization</li> <li>• Other community-based nonprofit organization</li> <li>• Community college</li> </ul>	
<b>Benefits Screening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community action agency</li> <li>• Other community-based nonprofit organization</li> <li>• Tribal organization</li> <li>• Community college</li> <li>• Local social services network</li> <li>• Social Security Administration: <a href="https://www.ssa.gov">ssa.gov</a> and benefits management through My Social Security at <a href="https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount">ssa.gov/myaccount</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Income Tax Preparation and Filing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site: <a href="https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers">irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-qualifying-taxpayers</a></li> <li>• Public library</li> <li>• Local social services network</li> </ul>	
<b>Managing Debt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Know before you owe: <a href="https://www.consumerfinance.gov/knowbeforeyouowe">consumerfinance.gov/knowbeforeyouowe</a></li> <li>• CFPB Paying for college: <a href="https://www.consumerfinance.gov">CFPB.gov</a></li> <li>• Paying for college: <a href="https://www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college">consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college</a></li> <li>• CFPB.gov Mortgage help: <a href="https://www.consumerfinance.gov/mortgagehelp">consumerfinance.gov/mortgagehelp</a></li> <li>• Legal aid: <a href="https://www.lsc.gov">lsc.gov</a></li> <li>• Nonprofit credit counseling organization</li> <li>• Tribal organization</li> <li>• Bank or credit union</li> </ul>	
<b>Dealing with debt and collectors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal aid: <a href="https://www.lsc.gov">lsc.gov</a></li> <li>• Local pro-bono attorneys' network or county bar association legal referral services</li> <li>• Nonprofit credit counseling organization</li> </ul>	

Topic	Possible Referral Partner	Local Contact Information
<b>Medical Bill Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MS.gov Medical Bill Rights: <a href="https://www.cms.gov/medical-bill-rights">cms.gov/medical-bill-rights</a></li> <li>Patient Advocate Foundation: <a href="https://www.patientadvocate.org">patientadvocate.org</a></li> <li>Hospital Financial Assistance: <a href="https://www.cms.gov/medical-bill-rights/help/guides/financial-assistance">cms.gov/medical-bill-rights/help/guides/financial-assistance</a></li> <li>Appealing a Health Plan Decision: <a href="https://www.healthcare.gov/appeal-insurance-company-decision/appeals">healthcare.gov/appeal-insurance-company-decision/appeals</a></li> </ul>	
<b>Understanding Credit Reports and Scores</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial education provider</li> <li>Housing counseling agency: <a href="https://hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US">hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US</a></li> <li>Community action agency</li> <li>Nonprofit credit counseling organization</li> <li>Bank or credit union</li> </ul>	
<b>Fixing Errors on Credit Reports and Scores</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nonprofit credit counseling organization</li> <li>Financial education provider</li> <li>Housing counseling agency: <a href="https://hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US">hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US</a></li> <li>Community action agency</li> <li>Bank or credit union</li> <li>Credit Reporting Agencies</li> </ul>	
<b>Using Financial Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial education provider</li> <li>Housing counseling agency: <a href="https://hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US">hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US</a></li> <li>Community action agency</li> <li>Nonprofit credit counseling organization</li> <li>Individual development account provider</li> <li>Local Bank On or Alliance for Economic Inclusion coalition</li> <li>Bank or credit union</li> </ul>	
<b>Protecting Consumer Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legal aid: <a href="https://www.lawhelp.org">lawhelp.org</a></li> <li>State attorney general</li> </ul>	
<b>Wealth or Asset Building</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of retirement plans: <a href="https://www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/types-of-retirement-plans">irs.gov/retirement-plans/plan-sponsor/types-of-retirement-plans</a></li> <li>Housing counseling agency: <a href="https://hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US">hud4.my.site.com/housingcounseling/s/?language=en_US</a></li> <li>Community action agency</li> <li>Nonprofit credit counseling organization</li> <li>Individual development account provider</li> <li>Tribal organization</li> <li>Other community-based nonprofit organization</li> </ul>	





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