

CDC: More than 8% of Americans Skipped, Delayed or Reduced Prescription Drugs Due to Costs

A new study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that 8.2% of Americans aged 18 to 64 skipped, delayed or reduced the amount of their prescription medications in 2021 because of cost concerns.

Cost-saving strategies such as skipping doses, taking reduced doses and delaying filling a prescription may make health conditions worse, result in more serious illness, and require additional expensive treatment, and therefore have implications for health and the costs of care.

The CDC's [National Health Interview Survey](#) revealed that 9.2 million adults were not taking medication as prescribed to reduce costs. According to the report, about 60% of adults 18 and older took at least one prescription medication in 2021, with 36% taking three or more. Out-of-pocket costs on retail drugs rose 4.8% to \$63 billion in 2021. Since high costs limit many Americans' ability to take their medications as prescribed, these patients may require additional treatment.

Consider the following key takeaways from the study:

- Women (9.1%) were likelier than men (7%) not to take medication as prescribed.
- The percentage of adults not taking medication as prescribed due to cost varied by race and origin: non-Hispanic other or multiple race adults, 11.5%; Black adults, 10.4%; Hispanic, 9.7%; White adults, 7.4%; and Asian adults, 6.8%.
- Adults with disabilities (20%) were more likely than adults without disabilities (7.1%) to skip, delay or reduce medications as prescribed due to cost.
- Uninsured adults (2.9%) were more likely than adults with other health coverage (11.4%), Medicaid (8%) or private health insurance (6.5%) to not take medications as prescribed due to cost.
- Adults without prescription drug coverage (18.1%) were more likely not to take medication as prescribed to reduce costs compared with adults with public (7.6%) or private (6.6%) prescription drug coverage.

Takeaway

Many Americans are skipping or cutting back on prescribed medications for financial reasons. This behavior is expected to continue as economic pressures strain Americans' finances, and unfortunately, it can result in serious negative health outcomes. Drug prices vary, so it can pay to encourage employees to shop around. Other common strategies for reducing prescription drug costs include choosing generic drug versions, comparing prices and using a preferred pharmacy.

Employers should continue to monitor health care trends, utilization and spending. Contact us today for more on employee health and wellness.