

# Growth in health benefit cost per employee slowed in 2012

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(HealthDay)—In 2012, growth in the average total health benefit cost per employee slowed to 4.1 percent, according to the National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans, published Nov. 14 by Mercer.

Researchers from Mercer used a national probability sample of 2,809 public and private employers with at least 10 employees to review trends in Employer-Sponsored Health Plans.

The authors note that growth in the average total [health benefit](#) cost per employee decreased from 6.1 percent in 2011 to 4.1 percent in 2012, with an average cost of \$10,558 per employee in 2012. A higher increase (5.4 percent) and higher average cost (\$11,003) was noted for larger employers with more than 500 employees. Assuming employers intend to continue reducing costs, the increase for 2013 should be around 5.0

percent. Cost-saving measures have included workforce [health management](#), with 78 percent of large employers reporting that senior leadership is supportive or very supportive of these programs. Financial and other incentives and penalties have been implemented to encourage participation in health management programs (54 percent of large employees).

"Employers are very aware that, in 2014, when the [health reform](#) law's provisions kick in, they will be asked to cover more employees and face added cost pressure," Julio Portalatin, president and CEO of Mercer, said in a statement. "They've taken bold steps to soften the impact and it's paying off already."

**More information:** [More Information](#)

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