

Many Americans skipping meds to save money, CDC says

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Lack of insurance coverage was key factor in patients cutting back on drugs they need.

(HealthDay)—Cash-strapped Americans often skip doses of pricey prescription drugs or take less than was prescribed by their doctor, new research shows.

Not surprising, a lack of [insurance coverage](#) was a key factor in whether patients went without needed meds, according to a report released Tuesday by the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)'s National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

Skipping medicines can have real consequences for health, the researchers warned.

"Adults who do not take [prescription medication](#) as prescribed have been shown to have poorer [health status](#) and increased emergency room use, hospitalizations and [cardiovascular events](#)," said the team led by Robin Cohen of the NCHS's Division of Health Interview Statistics.

Last year Americans spent \$45 billion out of pocket on prescription drugs, according to the CDC, but Americans continue to seek new ways to lower those costs. Overall, almost 20 percent of Americans between 18 and 64 years of age asked their doctor for a less expensive medication so they could save money, the new report found, and about the same number of older Americans did the same.

The research also showed that younger adults (between 18 and 64 years of age) were twice as likely to forego needed medications to save money, compared to adults aged 65 or older.

[Uninsured adults](#) were much more likely to try to save money on their prescription drugs. The CDC report showed that about 23 percent of uninsured people between 18 and 64 years old without coverage skipped taking their medicine to reduce costs, compared to about 14 percent of those with Medicaid and around 9 percent with private insurance. Those who the agency described as "poor or near poor" were also twice as likely as adults who were not poor not to take medication as prescribed.

Older Americans covered only by Medicare were more likely to seek out less expensive alternatives to their medications as well. The report revealed that about one-quarter of people covered by Medicare alone asked their doctor to find them something cheaper, compared to about one-fifth of those with [private insurance](#).

The report also revealed that 6 percent of adults between the ages of 18 and 64 opted for less expensive alternative therapies, compared with 2.3 percent of adults aged 65 and older. About one in every 50 American

adults also purchased their [prescription drugs](#) outside the United States in an attempt to save money.

The researchers compiled the research using data from the 2011 National Health Interview Survey. The full report was published April 9 on the website of the National Center for Health Statistics.

More information: The Kaiser Family Foundation provides more information on [prescription drug costs](#).

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