

Millions skipping doses, not filling prescriptions to save money, study finds

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A new report from the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has shed some new light on the health habits of Americans. According to the report, 8.2% of adults between the ages of 18 and 64

taking prescription medications reported not taking their drugs as prescribed in order to cut costs—adding up to 9.2 million affected Americans.

In 2021, out of pocket expenses on retail drugs rose to \$63 billion—a major factor in many U.S. residents' decision to stop taking their medications. Roughly 60% of U.S. adults 18 years old or older reported taking at least one [prescription medication](#) that year. A total 36% of people reported taking three or more medications.

"High costs may limit individuals' access to medications and lead to people not taking medication as prescribed; this may result in more serious illness and require additional treatment," the CDC reported.

Women were found to be more likely to not follow their prescriptions than men. Those with disabilities were found to be three times more likely to not take their medications as prescribed than those without disabilities. Adults in fair or [poor health](#) were also almost three times more likely to do so than those in excellent, very good, or [good health](#). Uninsured adults, however, were the most likely to not take their medications as prescribed due to costs.

While out of pocket retail drug spending rose by 4.8% in 2021, the CDC study largely laid the cause of the health trend at the feet of a rising number of total available retail prescriptions—not at rising prices.

"Although the average price per prescription remained flat between 2020 and 2021, the number of retail prescriptions grew, with out-of-pocket spending for [prescription medications](#) increasing by 4.8%," the CDC reported. "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."

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