Easy Tips to Save Money on Health Care

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As Americans work hard to meet all the obligations that come with work, family and everyday life, many are challenged to find time to manage all the financial elements affecting their health care.

The details associated with health care insurance can be confusing. At the same time, you want to make smart decisions about the quality health care you and your family need.

Out-of-pocket health care spending rose by more than 50 percent between 2010 and 2017, The Atlantic recently reported, partly because half of all health insurance policyholders in the U.S. are dealing with annual deductibles of at least $1,000.

Whether you're uninsured or simply facing a high insurance deductible, you can take several steps to better manage your health care budget. Consider how the following money-saving tips can help control the rising costs of health care.

- **Read bills with a critical eye.** Any bill can include administrative errors, and some estimates have indicated errors on as many as 80 percent of medical invoices issued, reports the Medical Billing Advocates of America. That statistic makes it well worth your while to examine and question your expenses before you pay.
- **Lower the cost of your meds.** The free Inside Rx prescription savings card provides discounts on prescription medications for eligible patients. According to the data, eligible patients have saved an average of 40 percent on the more than 100 featured brand medications included in the program, and even more on generic medications. Inside Rx is an option to help the uninsured, those facing high deductibles or anyone trying to save money on their meds. Inside Rx even offers prescription savings for pets

for qualifying medications. The card is free and easy to download, with no registration process.

- **Compare costs whenever possible.** Some medical services can be difficult to compare on an apples-to-apples basis, but it's worth doing your homework before making appointments for more standard services such as annual check-ups, lab work and testing, dental care or dermatology services. Check vendor websites, make phone calls and conduct web searches to find online databases, such as HealthcareBluebook.com, that suggest fair prices for services. If you're insured, your insurance provider can clarify what portion of the bill will be covered.
- **Be bold about negotiations.** It's OK to speak up. You have nothing to lose by politely asking your health care provider to work with you on the price of an upcoming service, especially when dealing with a private practice. Start the conversation by aiming for the Medicare rate or an amount close to that paid by commercial insurers. As an alternative, ask the office administrator to set up a manageable payment plan.
- **Consider paying cash up front.** Some vendors offer discounts for simply paying cash for your services without funneling everything through insurance. Even if you're insured, you can still evaluate whether immediate cash payments would be lower than your post-insurance costs.

Keeping a close eye on where you might be wasting money on health care can pay off in a big way — and the remedies don't have to be complicated. Conduct your due diligence on such costs to protect your financial health as vigorously as your physical health.