Ways to Save

Did you know that your employer pays the majority of your health care premium cost? You see **your** portion of premium costs deducted out of your paycheck, but that doesn't give you a complete picture of the cost of insurance. Many employers also pay a large part of the premium required to cover your eligible dependents. If you were to purchase coverage individually, it could be substantially more expensive.

Premium costs are calculated based in part on total health care claims costs each year. If costs increase significantly due to a high volume of employee health care spending, the premium rate, both yours and your employer's, will increase in order to cover the increasing cost. That means what you spend at the doctor's office has a direct correlation to the amount you pay per paycheck for health care coverage.

Think of it this way: if you frequently overspend at the grocery store, your grocery budget will be forced to increase. And to compensate for a larger grocery budget, that money must either be resourced from elsewhere – say, your clothing budget – or you must earn more to make up the difference. Health care works like this, too. When you overspend at the doctor's office, your employer must increase the amount they spend on health care costs. And to compensate for the increased spending, they must resource the money from elsewhere, either by cutting budget elsewhere or by increasing your out-of-paycheck premiums.

To pay the lowest amount out of paycheck, it is important for you to spend wisely on health care expenses. Here are some actions you can take to save money and lower health care costs for you and for your employer:

Visit the emergency room for true emergencies only.
Unnecessary emergency room visits are costly, drive up employer costs and are not what emergency rooms are designed for. Convenience care clinics and urgent care facilities will save you time and money for medical concerns that are non-emergent. To spend less and help keep premium costs low, plan ahead and know where to go before you are sick.

Use your resources.
Take advantage of your preventive care benefits and any wellness benefits or resources you may have. Employers offer these tools to help save money on health care costs in the long run.

Ask questions.
The Congressional Budget Office says that up to 30 percent of the health care in the United States is unnecessary. Care that you don't need is expensive, and it can also be harmful, exposing you to radiation or treatments that have their own risks. Before agreeing to tests and procedures, ask your doctor if you really need it, if there are any simpler or safer options and what the downsides could be. Also, be sure that all appointments, tests, procedures and treatments are scheduled at in-network facilities. Using out-of-network offices and labs cost you and your employer more.