

Health Insurance

How To Handle Insurance Rate Hikes

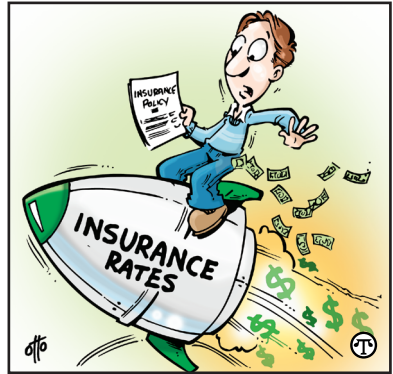
(NAPSA)—Are increased health insurance costs breaking your budget?

In addition to rate hikes like the surprising 39 percent increases recently reported in the national media, policyholders may also see their rates increase as they age. For example, when you turn 30, 40, 45, 55 or 60 years old, your monthly health insurance premiums may rise because of increased medical risks associated with your new age group.

Rate hikes can be especially frustrating if you buy your own health insurance coverage, or if you pay a large portion of the premium for your employer-sponsored health plan. However, you may have options. Here are four tips to help you avoid or successfully deal with unexpected rate hikes:

Lock-in premiums—Some insurance carriers may offer to lock-in individual and family premiums for the first one or two years, at no cost or for an additional monthly fee. Work with a licensed agent to find out which companies offer rate guarantees.

Comparison shop—It's a good idea to look around every few years to see if you're still getting a good deal. Don't assume you've got to stay with the same insurer in order to keep visiting the same doctors or hospitals. Web sites such as eHealthInsurance.com allow you to see if your doctor accepts plans from other carriers and to search for less expensive options. Since it's possible you could be declined due to your medical history, wait for an official approval before you cancel your old plan.



If your health insurance rates are rising, it may be time to look around for another insurer.

Look at other options from your insurer—When informing you of a rate increase, your insurer may offer alternative options for which you can automatically qualify. Less expensive options typically have higher deductibles, but allow you to maintain your coverage and access discounted rates for medical care. Even if your insurer doesn't offer you a specific alternative plan, you can still contact them and try to move to a policy with a lower monthly premium.

Investigate low-cost public programs—If private insurance is no longer an option for you, contact the Foundation for Health Coverage Education at CoverageForAll.org and find out what free or low-cost health care options are available in your area.

To learn more about your health insurance options and reach a licensed agent, visit eHealthInsurance.com or call toll free at (800) 977-8860.