

Terms You Need to Know

Health insurance seems to have its own language. You will get more out of your plans if you understand the most common terms.

MEDICAL

OUT-OF-POCKET COST - A healthcare expense you are responsible for paying with your own money, whether from your bank account, credit card, or from a health account such as an HSA, FSA or HRA.

DEDUCTIBLE - The amount of healthcare expenses you have to pay for with your own money before your health plan will pay. The deductible does not apply to preventive care and certain other services.

COINSURANCE - After you meet the deductible amount, you and your health plan share the cost of covered expenses. Coinsurance is always a percentage totaling 100%. For example, if the plan pays 70% coinsurance, you are responsible for paying your coinsurance share, 30% of the cost.

COPAY - A set fee you pay whenever you use a particular healthcare service, for example, when you see your doctor or fill a prescription. After you pay the copay amount, your health plan pays the rest of the bill for that service.

IN-NETWORK / OUT-OF-NETWORK - Network providers (doctors, hospitals, labs, etc.) are contracted with your health plan and have agreed to charge lower fees to plan members, as negotiated in their contract with the health plan. Services from out-of-network providers can cost you more because the providers are under no obligation to limit their maximum fees. With some plans, such as HMOs and EPOs, services from out-of-network providers are not covered at all.

OUT-OF-POCKET MAXIMUM - The most you would pay from your own money for covered healthcare expenses in one year. Once you reach your plan's out-of-pocket maximum dollar amount (by paying your deductible, coinsurance and copays), the plan pays for all eligible expenses for the rest of the plan year.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG

BRAND NAME - A drug sold under its trademarked name. For example, Lipitor is the brand name of a common cholesterol medicine. You generally pay a higher copay for brand name drugs.

GENERIC DRUG - A drug that has the same active ingredients as a brand name drug, but is sold under a different name. For example, Atorvastatin is the generic name for medicines with the same formula as Lipitor. You generally pay a lower copay for generic drugs.

PREFERRED DRUG - Each health plan has a list of prescription medicines that are preferred based on an evaluation of effectiveness and cost. Another name for this list is a "formulary." The plan may charge more for non-preferred drugs or for brand name drugs that have generic versions. Drugs that are not on the preferred drug list may not be covered.