

# Why do you need health insurance?

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By Sylvia Bittner

Costs for medical care are higher than ever. So high in fact, about half of all personal bankruptcies in the USA are due to uninsured medical expenses. According to one study, over a third of the uninsured have problems paying medical bills. The unpaid bills were substantial enough that many had been turned over to collection agencies, and nearly a quarter of the uninsured adults said they had changed their way of life significantly to pay medical bills.

## Health insurance saves you money

Just one surgery and hospital stay can cost tens of thousands of dollars. Without health insurance, do you have enough money saved to pay for unforeseen medical bills? Most likely, you don't. Unless you have employer-sponsored health insurance, buying an affordable health insurance policy can be the most important thing you do to secure your financial welfare.

## Health insurance keeps you healthier

A quality health insurance plan can also keep you healthier overall. According to a 2002 study by the Institute of Medicine, lack of insurance compromises your health. The uninsured are 30 to 50 percent more likely to be hospitalized for an avoidable condition, with the average cost of an avoidable hospital stay estimated to be about \$3,300. Uninsured individuals also receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, and once diagnosed, tend to receive less therapeutic care and have higher mortality rates than insured individuals.

## Buy health insurance before you need to use it

If you're young and healthy, you may think you don't need health insurance. But the truth is, if you wait until you're sick or injured to purchase health insurance, you'll pay a lot more – or find you don't qualify for the coverage you need. And you can't predict when you'll be diagnosed with a major illness or be involved in an accident. So it's best to purchase a health plan before you need to use it.

When you buy health insurance you're buying peace of mind, an opportunity for a healthier life and a piece of financial security.

*Sylvia Bittner is the Health Services Coordinator for Michigan Farm Bureau. Michigan Farm Bureau is a membership based association and the largest general farming organization in Michigan. For over 70 years, Michigan Farm Bureau has partnered with Blue Cross® Blue Shield® of Michigan to offer unique health and dental insurance plans specifically for our members. For more information about Farm Bureau's health and dental insurance plans and other member benefits, contact your local county Farm Bureau administrative manager or call 1-888-249-4335.*