

The Financial Impact of Breast Cancer

Compiled from a variety of sources by Breast Cancer Options

Cancer treatment can be very expensive, even if you have health insurance. For many cancer survivors, the cost of diagnosis and treatment can have a lasting financial impact. Here are some of the financial issues faced by cancer survivors:

- Cancer treatment costs not covered by insurance and out-of-pocket payments can result in significant debt that lasts long after treatment has ended.
- Survivors who can no longer work may lose health, disability and life insurance benefits provided by their employer.
- Difficulty finding a job that offers health, disability and life insurance benefits.
- Insurance companies may not pay for treatments that they consider experimental, such as treatments done as part of a clinical trial.
- Patients who receive treatment outside their hometown or state face additional costs of travel, lodging, meals and other living expenses.

***Medical bills can completely overwhelm a family when illness strikes.
25 million people hesitate to take their medications in order to control medical costs.***

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation medical debt is the No. 1 source of personal bankruptcy filings in the U.S

- 56M Americans under age 65 will have trouble paying medical bills. This is the reason most Americans file for bankruptcy.
- Studies found that 66.5% of all bankruptcies were tied to medical issues —either because of high costs for care or time out of work.
- Most people do not realize that their health insurance may not be enough to protect them.

Cost of Cancer Care

- Cancer care costs are rising at two to three times the rate of other health care costs
- New cancer therapies can cost more than \$60,000 per month
- Average monthly cost per drug is \$10,000
- Insurance companies have shifted cost to patient by increasing premiums, deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, and other out of pocket expenses

Financial Impact

- 30% of cancer survivors report financial hardship
- Bankruptcy rates are 2.5 times higher than those without a history of cancer

Tips to Lower Medicine Costs: Medications can be a major expense for people with cancer. Make sure you take a look at your insurance plan's prescription coverage to see what's covered and what's not —and how much you can expect to pay out of pocket. If you're having trouble, get help from your insurance plan or a patient financial counselor at your hospital.

These strategies also may help:

- **Ask your doctor or pharmacist about generic medicines.** They are usually less expensive than brand name medications.
- **Ask your doctor for samples of any medicines you're prescribed.** *Samples might not be available for all medicines.*
- **Ask if the form of the medication affects your cost.** Oral chemotherapy medications —taken by mouth in pill form —are more convenient, but they cost more than medications given intravenously. A medication taken at home or given in a physician's office might not be reimbursed in the same way that a hospital-based treatment is.
- **Shop around.** Call the pharmacies in your area to check the prices of the medicines you've been prescribed. You may find that some larger stores have lower prices for commonly prescribed pain medicines and antibiotics. Ask if your insurance plan offers a mail-order prescription medication option that might cut down on your costs.
- **If a medication isn't covered, ask your pharmacist about alternatives.** They may be able to suggest a medication that does the same thing as the one your doctor recommended —and *is* covered.

• **Medicine assistance programs:** Many pharmaceutical companies have set up programs to help people get the medicine they need at a reduced cost, or no cost in some cases. Some offer assistance with getting medications covered through your insurance company. Other organizations offer help paying for medicines and other treatments to people in need. Below are some of the most well-known programs and organizations. You may need to meet certain age or income requirements to enroll in some of these programs

Prescription Savings Cards- Vary by Pharmacy- ie. Letrozole 2.5 MG Tablet cost \$11.66 at Shoprite and \$158.60 at Rite Aid. The free cards will tell you where you can buy at the cheapest price. Additional coupons are sometimes available on their websites.

New York Prescription Assistance Program-

<https://newyork.prescriptionassistance.info>

WellRX: Find the lowest price for your medication at more than 62,000 pharmacies. www.wellrx.com

Partnership for Prescription Assistance-www.pparx.org

Discount Drug Network has a network of over 66,000 pharmacies in the United States. Use their mobile app to search for local pharmacies and discounted prescription prices. www.discountdrugnetwork.com

GoodRx-<https://www.goodrx.com>

RxHope-www.rxhope.com

NeedyMeds-www.needymeds.org

RxAssist-www.rxassist.org

InsideRX- <https://insiderx.com>

Financial assistance for men or women with breast cancer: Here is a list of national financial assistance programs for people diagnosed with breast cancer. Additional local and state resources may be available.

- Breast Cancer Charities of America's [Help Now Fund](#) provides grants to ease the financial burdens experienced by those in active breast cancer treatment.
- [Genevieve's Helping Hands](#) offers small financial grants to be used by young breast cancer patients (under age 40) to extend their recuperation period after cancer related surgeries and treatment.
- [The Gift of Hope](#) breast cancer foundation is dedicated to providing financial support to women in need during their course of treatment.
- [The Pink Fund](#) provides financial support to help breast cancer patients focus on healing while improving survivorship outcomes.
- The Sisters Network [Breast Cancer Assistance Program](#) aims to assist breast cancer survivors facing financial challenges while undergoing surgery, radiation or chemotherapy treatment.

Resources

How much does breast cancer treatment cost in the U.S.?

www.singlecare.com/blog/breast-cancer-treatment-cost-u-s

Breast Cancer Causes Long-Term Financial Burden for Many People, Especially Those With Lymphedema

www.breastcancer.org/research-news/bc-causes-financial-burden-for-many

Legal & Financial Impacts of Cancer

www.mdanderson.org/patients-family/life-after-cancer/legal-financial-impacts.html