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18 Million Americans Can't Pay for Needed Meds

Sept. 22, 2021

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By Steven Reinberg, *HealthDay Reporter*

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 22, 2021 (HealthDay News) -- As many as 18 million Americans can't afford their prescribed medications, a new nationwide poll finds.



 (HEALTHDAY)

That's 7% of the adult population in the United States. But when it comes to households making less than \$24,000 per year, the percentage jumps to 19%, the West Health/Gallup poll revealed.

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Here are the key findings:

- The inability to pay for a prescription is twice as high in households with an adult under 65, compared with households with at least one senior – 8% and 4%, respectively. Nearly all Americans under 65 are too young to have health coverage through Medicare.
- Of older adults, 40% have at least five prescription drugs, compared with 23% of 50- to 64-year-olds and fewer than 10% of those under 50.
- Among respondents with three or more chronic conditions, 11% could not afford their medicine. Of those with eight or more prescriptions, 18% could not afford their medicine. Among those with no chronic conditions and no more than two prescribed drugs, these rates dropped to 4% and 5%, respectively.
- People with chronic conditions who can't afford prescriptions include those with diabetes (12%), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD (12%), depression (12%), and those who are immune compromised (15%).
- While 7% of respondents said they or a family member has gone without at least one prescribed medication because of costs, 10% skipped doses in the past year as a way of saving medicine and money.
- Eighteen percent of respondents in households making less than \$48,000 annually said they or someone in their household had skipped a pill. In households making \$90,000 to \$180,000 year, 7% said they had skipped a pill in the past year.

Adults under 65 are about twice as likely as older adults to skip doses to preserve medicine and cut costs, the findings showed.

While sicker and lower-earning Americans are most likely to ration their medicine if they can afford it at all, support for government cost controls is widespread, the survey found.



"Substantial majorities of U.S. adults, in turn, support government involvement in a number of aspects of cost control, including setting limits on drug price increases and allowing government negotiation of prices for high-cost drugs for which there are no competitors," the pollsters said in a Gallup news release.

The online poll was conducted Jan. 25 to 31, March 15 to 21 and June 14 to 20. It included about 120,000 adults aged 18 and over nationwide.

More information

For more about prescription drug costs, visit the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#).

SOURCE: Gallup organization, news release, Sept. 21, 2021

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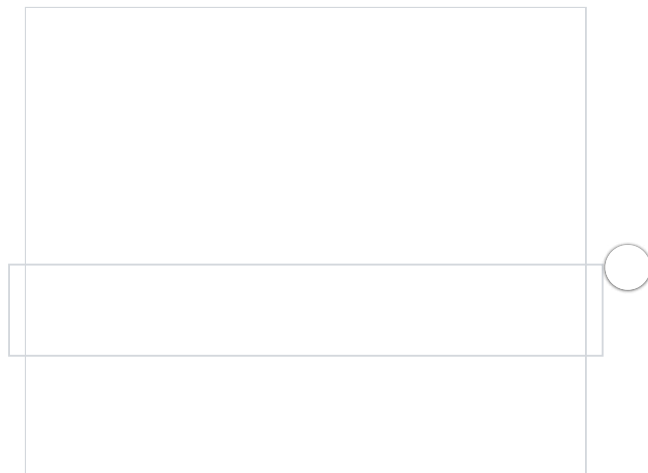
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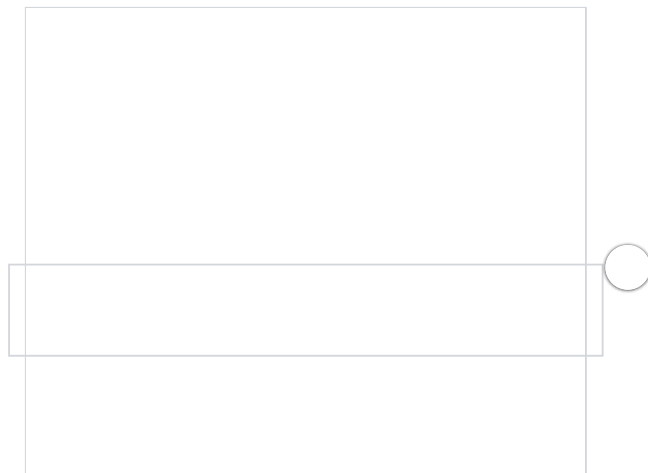
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