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## To Save on Drug Costs, Consumers Cut Corners

*Janice Simmons, for HealthLeaders Media , August 24, 2010*

Consumers have been economizing on healthcare costs in ways that could be dangerous to their health, including cutting back on their medications, according to a [Consumer Reports National Research Center health](#) prescription drug poll released Tuesday.

In the past year, 39% of more than 1,100 individuals interviewed said that they took some action save money. Among those surveyed, 27% who take medication said they failed to comply with their prescriptions, while 38% of those younger than 65 without drug coverage skipped filling prescriptions altogether.

The poll found that nearly half (45%) of Americans take at least one prescription drug on a regular basis, and on average, they routinely take four medications.

More than two-thirds (69%) of those taking prescription drugs said pharmaceutical manufacturers have too much influence on physicians' prescribing decisions, and half said that physicians are too eager to prescribe a drug when various non-drug options are available for managing a condition.

Another 51% said they thought that physicians did not consider a patient's ability to pay when prescribing a drug, nearly half (47%) said they thought gifts from pharmaceutical companies influenced physicians' choices of drugs for their patients, and 41% said they thought physicians tended to prescribe newer, more expensive drugs.

The advertising budgets of pharmaceutical companies are having an impact on consumers, the survey noted: 20% of consumers who take a prescription drug have asked their physicians for a drug they saw advertised, with a majority of those physicians (59%) agreeing to prescribe the medication.

The health poll also revealed that the public has a strong desire for more safety information and details about possible side effects: 87% said that knowing the safety of a prescription drug was a top priority to them, while 79% were concerned about drug interactions, and 78% cared about the side effects of a drug.

"The safety information provided on all fronts—in hospitals, at the doctor's office, and the pharmacy—is hit or miss," said John Santa, MD, MPH, director of the Consumer Reports Health Ratings Center in Yonkers, NY.

"When considering a new medication, consumers should ask their doctors about the drug in question, its purported use, how it should be taken, whether certain activities should be avoided, whether drug interactions are possible, and the types of side effects that could occur," Santa added.

According to the health poll, more than half (53%) of consumers currently taking medications have talked to their physicians in the past 12 months about switching to a different prescription drug, with side effects being one of the main reasons, in addition to cost and lack of insurance coverage.

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*Janice Simmons is a senior editor and Washington, DC, correspondent for HealthLeaders Media Online. She can be reached at [jsimmons@healthleadersmedia.com](mailto:jsimmons@healthleadersmedia.com).*

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