

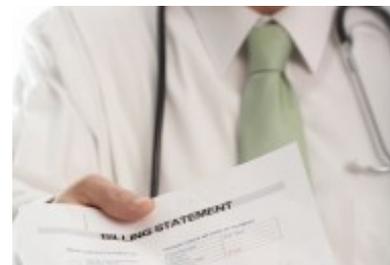
Your Medical Debt Rx: 7 Ways to Manage High Medical Bills

5 days ago

When Amanda Griffith welcomed her third child in May 2014, she was expecting to pay some out-of-pocket costs.

After all, she had a high-risk pregnancy, which required additional monitoring and tests that wouldn't be totally covered by her health insurance.

Even so, she and her husband weren't prepared for the nearly \$3,000 bill she would receive less than a month after giving birth.



“And that was just for the hospital,” says Griffith, 38, of Norton, Mass. “You also get separate bills from the anesthesiologist, from the doctor’s office, and for the lab work.”

Want More?

[Health Care by Decade: A Guide to Protecting Your Health in Your 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s](#)

[5 Ways Your Health Can Impact Your Financial Well-Being](#)

[3 People, 3 Insurance Plans: ‘How My Health Coverage Helps Save Me Money’](#)

She couldn't take care of the bill all at once, so her only option was to figure out a repayment plan. “I don't remember having a bill that was this high [for my previous two kids],” Griffith adds. “I had never asked for a payment plan before, so I was nervous about doing it.”

Fortunately, the hospital told her she had up to two years to take care of the balance. And so she's paying her bill down, little by little, contributing \$115 per month.

Many Americans, at some point in their lives, find themselves in the same predicament of having to manage medical debt.

In fact, nearly 20% of U.S. consumers—almost 43 million people—have overdue medical bills on their credit reports, according to the [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau](#).

And 15 million of those consumers have *only* health-related debt as a strike against them—indicating that, apart from medical costs, they are likely meeting other debt obligations.

Despite those telling statistics, there has been little discussion about *how* to deal with medical debt—like what to do if you can't pony up a big lump sum, how to work with doctors or hospitals on payment strategies, or even whether there are ways to potentially reduce the balance that you owe.

Exacerbating the issue is that even if you upgraded your insurance coverage this year—or plan to do so before open enrollment season ends in a few days—there are many factors at play when it comes to health care costs that it's nearly impossible to predict what your expenses (or debt) could add up to.

RELATED: [Medical Debt: The Next Personal Finance Crisis?](#)

[123 Next page >](#)

