

## **MEDICINE**

# **Helping Manage The Cost of Asthma And COPD Inhalers**

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By Jeffrey Lewis  
For NewsUSA

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With the intense summer heat and horrible air quality, some people across the California Central Valley and other areas of the country are finding it difficult to breathe. When this happens, they quickly turn to their asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) inhalers. Greater use of these devices means more refills are needed.

For many middle-class families, the ongoing out-of-pocket costs for asthma or COPD medications is a growing burden. When money runs low, some people will try to stretch the use of their inhalers for as long as possible; others try to get by without them at all, placing their health at risk.

Asthma affects about one in every 13 Americans, one-fourth of whom are under the age of 18. It is the third-leading cause of hospital stays for children. COPD is a group of progressive lung diseases that obstructs airflow. Some 16 million Americans suffer from COPD, 70 percent of whom are 45 and older.

While many patients and caregivers struggle with these complex conditions, the high-cost insurance premiums, along with steep deductibles, copays, and poor prescription coverage, can prove a significant barrier. This is compounded by the fact that 75 percent of patients are not taking their medication correctly. And the impact of nonadherence can mean a visit to the hospital.

Asthma and COPD require an arsenal of medications. And, it is not uncommon for people suffering from one of these conditions



to be impacted by other chronic conditions.

Rather than point fingers at medication costs or insurance company profits, it is important to help people find solutions.

Copay assistance cards, also called copay coupons, can help take the financial sting out of the cost of medication. Go to [www.legacyhealthendowment.org](http://www.legacyhealthendowment.org) to obtain one, and look for the button, "Click for Asthma and COPD Recommendations."

Please remember to start with your local pharmacist. He or she is the most informed about prescription medications.

And if you are uninsured, there are programs that often cover close to 100 percent of your costs. Try this website, [mat.org](http://mat.org), offered by the pharmaceutical manufacturer's trade association.

Cost should never be a barrier to care.

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