



Resources for Tough Times

With the ups and downs of the economy and lean job market, many people with diabetes find themselves with limited resources to manage diabetes effectively. In times like these it's often hard to know where to turn. However, knowing what resources are available can help make managing diabetes on a limited budget possible.

Prescription Drug Assistance Programs Many pharmaceutical companies have special programs to help those in need obtain medications at little to no cost. Such programs require an application process which is often initiated by a physician who also will receive the medication(s). Prescription Drug Assistance Programs change regularly with drugs being added or removed. Be aware, applying for such programs may take up to 2-6 weeks for processing. Use the internet to obtain current information. If access to a computer is an issue, go to the nearest library. Libraries have computers available for public use.

Internet Resources Offering Access to Patient/Prescription Drug Assistance Programs:

- www.PPARx.org: Partnership for Prescription Assistance is a service provided by PhRMA (Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America) to help the uninsured or underinsured locate and apply for patient assistance programs based on financial need. The service is free and offers information about pharmaceutical company programs for more than 2,500 brand-name and generic medications. For more information call (888) 477-2669.
- www.needymeds.com: A good resource with access to all drug programs. The website includes a list of prescription drugs available through patient assistance programs, a list of pharmaceutical companies who offer assistance, discount card comparisons, patient assistance program applications and links to Medicaid sites.
- www.prescriptionhope.com: For the under-insured and un-insured who do not have prescription drug coverage. This program serves those who earn up to \$30,000/year as a single person or up to \$50,000/year as a couple. Seniors on Medicare may qualify. Those using a discount prescription drug card may qualify. No age limit. \$12/prescription per month with access to more than 1,500 brand-name medications. For more information call 1 (877) 296-4673.
- www.rxoutreach.com: Offers generic brand medicines for diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure and depression. Easy to access regardless of age. No contracts or monthly bills. Can utilize even if on another discount medicine program or patient assistance program. Fee - \$18 / 3 months / prescription or \$30 / 6 months / prescription. For more information call (800) 769-3880.
- www.rxassist.org: Provided by Volunteers in Health Care via support by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, RxAssist offers resources to help locate patient assistance programs. Also available to print via a pdf file is an information packet with tips to help locate resources. For more information call (877) 844-8442.
- www.meddataservices.com: A site similar to rxhope.com with requirements, information (for those who financially qualify) on over 150 companies with access to over 800 medications. Options for manual fill or auto fill applications, on-line renewal and data tracking. For more information call (888) 246-1085 central time 9am-5pm Monday-Friday.

Prescription Drug Assistance Programs Specific to Insulin Use

- **Novo Nordisk**: Available products include Novolin, Novopen III, Novopen IV, NovoLog, NovoLog Mix 70/30 or Velosulin BR. A physician's office calls (800) 727-6500 #4 to request an application. After approval insulin is sent to the provider's office within 4-6 weeks. A three-month supply is available for one time only. Renewals require a new application and are subject to a case-by-case basis. A maximum of a one-year supply may be granted.
- **Sanofi-Aventis Pharmaceuticals**: Lantus is available for those who meet specific income requirements. (Other medications produced by Aventis are also listed.) An application is available by calling (800) 221-4025 and requires income/expense information for the applying household. If approved Lantus is available at a minimum of 10 vials and in increments of ten. Supplies are sent directly to a physician's office. A new application is required with every refill with no specified time limits.
- **Lilly Cares Program**: Available products include Humalog, glucagon emergency kit and all types of Humulin. (Other medications produced by Lilly are also listed.) Eligibility is based on a case-by-case basis and inability to pay or lack of third-party drug payment assistance (private or government programs.) To initiate this program a physician's office must call (800) 545-6962 for an application. Applicant needs to provide monthly gross income as well as monthly out-of-pocket expenses. Once approved a voucher is issued for a four-month supply of insulin at a local pharmacy. A new application is required with every refill for an indefinite time.

Prescription Discount Cards

Some pharmaceutical companies offer discount cards based on financial need. An example of such a program is Together Rx (www.TogetherRxAccess.com) or call (800) 444-4106. Together Rx Access offers 25-40% savings or more on brand-name medications and blood glucose testing supplies for Lifescan or TheraSense meters - if financially eligible. *Qualifications for using Prescription Discount Cards include:*

- An income of less than \$30,000 or up to \$70,000 for a family of five.
- No prescription drug coverage either public or private.
- Not entitled to Medicaid or Medicare.
- Legal US resident.

Other programs such as the Nonprofit Warehouse (in conjunction with Kmart Pharmacies) or The Medicine Program (www.themedicineprogram.com) offer a free drug discount card regardless of age or income. Savings range from 15-65%. For more information visit www.nonprofitwarehouse.com or call (770) 541-7777. A disadvantage to using drug discount cards is being limited to only using one company. Multiple medications will require applying to each company for a separate card.

Durable Medical Equipment Syringes and blood sugar testing supplies such as strips, meter, and lancets are often referred to as Durable Medical Equipment. Unlike prescription drug benefits assistance for Durable Medical Equipment is limited. Available resources include:

- **BD (Becton Dickinson)**: Offers a one time only coupon for 100 syringes redeemable at a local pharmacy. Physician's approval is not required. Supplies can be obtained by calling (888) 232-2737, option 3 then 1. A renewal may be available however it is on a case-by-case basis. Coupons may be offered instead.

- **BG Monitoring Strips:** A small supply of strips may be available from a pharmaceutical company by calling the (1-800) phone number provided on the back of a blood glucose meter. If strips are not available try asking about coupons or short-dated strips for *medically indigent people* (be sure to use this phrase to emphasize the need for assistance.) Sometimes manufacturers give away strips that have used up their shelf life and can't be shipped to pharmacies or clinics.
- **Byram's Uninsured Program:** Includes a discount program for diabetes testing supplies. A complimentary Home Diagnostics meter is provided with the first purchase of test strips. For more information call 1(877) 902-9726.

Additional tips include:

- Try asking a diabetes educator. Some educators receive free samples of strips to help with clients in need.
- If the cost of strips is an issue consider switching to an off-brand meter system that may offer savings on strip expenses or one in which compatible generic strips is an option. Be advised that although generic strips are cheaper some are more accurate than others.
- If the budget is tight, talk with a doctor or diabetes educator about how to optimize monitoring based on available income and blood glucose records. Identify where cut backs can safely occur and when it is most critical to test.
- Don't wipe blood or urine-testing strips with cotton saved from vitamin or medicine bottles. This will produce inaccurate results.
- When extra cash is available buy an emergency stash of strips to keep on hand for sick days or other times of stress. Be sure to check the expiration date since strips do not keep indefinitely.

Tips to Help Save \$\$\$

- **Chain Savings** – Drugstore chains, grocery store pharmacy chains and pharmacies in large retail outlets buy in huge quantities resulting in lower prices. Many independent pharmacies have joined drugstore wholesale buying clubs to offer prices that may be competitive with larger chain stores.
- **Buy in Bulk** – Many pharmacies offer a discount price for larger prescriptions. For example, the 100 test strip boxes cost a little less per strip than the 50-strip boxes. Ask the pharmacist how to get the best deal and then ask for a prescription from the doctor for that amount. This may require prior approval from the insurance company.
- **Mail-Order** – Compare prices among mail-order pharmacies. Mail-order pharmacies or those who specialize in durable medical equipment often buy in large quantities at better prices. Discounts are passed on to customers. Obtain prices from all and compare totals for the best prices. Toll-free 800 numbers and a variety of companies are available at the back of every Diabetes Forecast issue. Note: many require customers to have insurance or pay up front.
- **Free Samples** – When starting a new medication for the first time ask a doctor if he or she has free samples before filling a prescription. This helps to assess if the medication works and if side effects can be tolerated. If samples are not available ask for a trial prescription with a smaller amount of pills.
- **Smart Choices** – Before buying a meter shop around to see who has the best prices for test strips, which represents the on-going costs beyond the purchase of the meter. Ask if rebates or other coupons are available to help obtain a meter. Ask if the start-up kit includes test strips.
- **Syringes** – Use manufacturer's coupons whenever available. Ask if the local pharmacy carries house-brand syringes or check large chain stores such as Wal-Mart. Although discouraged but if the circumstances are truly needy, ask your diabetes educator about syringe reuse and proper techniques.
- **Recycle Lancets** – Again, although not recommended but if circumstances require the need to recycle do so safely. Lancets can be left in the fingerstick device however don't allow anyone else to use the device. Keep the fingerstick device in a safe place or container to avoid others being stuck and dispose of lancets properly when finished.

- Ketone-Testing Strips: You don't have to buy a whole vial of ketone-testing strips. Ask the pharmacy if they are willing to sell strips in packages as few as 20.

Community Clinics/Federally Qualified Health Centers

Community clinics offer access to comprehensive health care for those in financial need. For eligibility requirements and the nearest clinic contact either the Oregon Primary Care Association (503) 228-8852 (website www.orpca.org) or the Free Clinic Foundation of America (540) 344-8242 (website www.freeclinic.net.)

Looking At Problems Differently

Sometimes looking at problems from different perspectives can free money to purchase supplies as needed. Assistance with food, housing or utilities may be an option to help ease financial constraints. Food assistance programs include federally funded programs such as food stamps or WIC, food banks or charitable groups who refer to local resources such as United Way, Catholic Charities or The Salvation Army. For housing or utilities call local housing authorities for the housing emergency office. They may pay the rent or lend money for one month's rent. Community advocacy groups may be able to provide information referrals and mediation services.

With tough economic times continuing such resources and need for assistance will increase. Knowing what resources are available can help make management of diabetes in tough times a little easier.

For More Information About Diabetes

For information about diabetes contact the American Diabetes Association at (1-800) DIABETES (342-2383.)