

Prescription drug costs are one of the biggest health care issues in the nation. Over the past few years, NCHS has published several reports examining the strategies that American adults are taking to reduce the cost of their prescription medication. This week, for the first time, NCHS is looking at the same issue in relation to people dealing with a specific disease – in this case, adults who have been diagnosed with diabetes. The report examined the proportion of adults who did not take their medication as prescribed and also what percentage asked their doctor for a less expensive medication.

Using data from the 2017-2018 National Health Interview Survey, the new report found that among adults with diagnosed diabetes, more than 13 percent did not take their medication as prescribed to save money and nearly 1 in 4 asked their doctor for a medication that costs less. Among adults with diagnosed diabetes, women are more likely than men to not take their medication as prescribed. Adults under age 65 with diagnosed diabetes are more likely than those age 65 and over to not take their medication as prescribed, and are more likely to ask their doctor for a lower cost medication.

Insurance coverage obviously plays a big role in determining who is more likely to ask their doctor for a less expensive medication and also who doesn't take their medication as prescribed. Adults age 65 and over with Medicare and Medicaid are less likely to ask their doctor for lower cost drugs, and are also less likely to skip taking their medication that they have. As for adults under age 65, the uninsured are considerably more likely to ask their doctor for lower cost medication and are also more likely to not take their medication as prescribed.