



Top Four Health Insurance Myths

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Between working, going to school, and hanging out with friends, there's barely enough time left in the day to sleep, much less think about your health insurance coverage. If the above sentence sounds eerily familiar, then you're not alone. Recent studies have shown that young adults are one of the largest groups of uninsured in America. Unfortunately, health insurance is one aspect of your life that you can't afford to ignore.

Even though I'm a doctor now, I still remember what it was like as a college and medical student, scrapping by on literally dollars a day. Health insurance wasn't one of my top priorities then either, but after seeing in my later professional life the devastating long-term injuries (both financial and physical) that many young adults suffer when they don't have adequate health insurance coverage, it's something that all young adults need to take a serious look at.

Unfortunately, many young adults don't even investigate their [health insurance options](#) because of myths that have been perpetuated by well meaning friends, family, or associates. Because being uninsured can cause severe personal repercussions, including crippling amounts of medical debt or severe, long-term health problems, let's dispel these myths once and for all.

Myth #1: I'm never sick so I don't need health insurance.

While it's true that young adults are some of the healthiest people around, no one is bullet-proof. Even the healthiest young adult can get a serious illness like cancer or suffer a devastating accident. Remember, the

point of health insurance (or any insurance for that matter) is to protect you against a random, catastrophic event that could devastate you financially. With health care costs in the tens of thousands of dollars for many accidents and illnesses, you can't afford to be uninsured.

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Myth #2: I have a job so I can pay any medical debt over time.

This is a common belief among young adults that is completely false. If you become sick, it's likely that you won't be able to work for a period of time, and thus you won't have any income to pay your medical bills. Even if you are able to return to work, the sheer amount of debt may cripple you financially for the rest of your life. Let's give an example. If you accumulate \$50,000 of medical debt from a bad car accident, you would have to pay over \$500 a month for the next 30 years to pay that debt off. Not too many people I know can do that without impacting their lives tremendously.

Myth #3: If I get sick, the doctor has to see me even if I can't pay.

While it's true that an emergency room has to evaluate and treat you for an "emergency" even if you don't have health insurance, the definition of emergency is fairly strict and won't apply in many illnesses. Let's say that you're diagnosed with lymphoma, the most common cancer in young adults. You may need surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. However, the hospital is not legally required to provide you with any of these services because while lymphoma is obviously a very serious illness, it's not technically a medical "emergency." Not to mention that even if you were able to receive medical care, the debt load could easily total into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Myth #4: Health insurance is extremely expensive.

Probably the most common and dangerous myth among young adults is that health insurance is extremely expensive. While this is true in some circumstances, there are often options available for healthy young adults that can result in fairly low premiums, often less than \$50 or \$100 a month. Most people spend at least \$100 a month on insurance for their car, something that can be replaced if broken. Shouldn't you be willing to spend that amount to insure your body, something that isn't as easily replaced?

I hope that I've been able to emphasize the importance of maintaining [health insurance coverage](#) to everyone out there. In the next few articles, we'll discuss how to find affordable health insurance coverage, ways to cut down on other health care costs, and some of the common pitfalls to avoid.

Although Dr. Chou has been practicing medicine for five years, he still thinks he's young. His can be reached at vhc@choumd.com.

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