

## HEALTH

**PFIZER PRIMARY AND BOOSTER & MODERNA BOOSTER**  
NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY

Sequoyah Health Center	Tennessee Riverpark	Birchwood Clinic
9527 W Ridge Trail Rd. Soddy-Daisy, TN 37379	4301 Amnicola Hwy. Chattanooga, TN 37402	5625 TN-60, Birchwood, TN 37308
SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT	SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT	SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT
8:00am - 4:00pm	9:00am - 4:00pm	8:00am - 3:30pm

Hamilton County Health Department Questions? Call 423-209-8383

## HAMILTON COUNTY WEEKLY VACCINATION EVENTS

*Health Department COVID-19 vaccination events are free and open to the public. No appointment is necessary. Multiple locations are available. Please call our hotline at 423-209-8383 or visit our online calendar at [vaccine.hamiltontn.gov](http://vaccine.hamiltontn.gov) to see where the Health Department is offering events throughout the week.*

(CONTRIBUTED GRAPHIC: [HamiltonTN.gov](http://HamiltonTN.gov))

## Protect Yourself: Holidays Are Peak Time for Heart Attacks

This time of year can be hard on the heart. The United States has more heart attack deaths between Christmas and New Year's Day than at any other time of year, so the American Heart Association (AHA) offers some holiday health tips.

"The holidays are a busy, often stressful, time for most of us," Dr. Donald Lloyd-Jones, volunteer president of the AHA says.

"Routines are disrupted; we may tend to eat and drink more and exercise and relax less. We also may not be listening to our bodies or paying attention to warning signs, thinking it can wait until after the new year. All of these can be contributors to increasing the risk for heart attack at this time of the year."

This may be even greater for folks who didn't get to be with family and friends last year due to COVID-19 restrictions, he notes in an association news release.

"It's incredibly important to be aware of these risks," Lloyd-Jones, who is also head of preventive medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, in Chicago adds.

"Take a few simple steps that can help keep your heart healthy with much

to celebrate in the new year."

What are the risk factors for heart attack?

Several health conditions, your lifestyle, and your age and family history can increase your risk for heart disease and heart attack.

According to the CDC, about half of all Americans have at least one of the three key risk factors for heart disease: high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and smoking.

Although some risk factors for heart attack cannot be controlled (such as your age or family history), you can take steps to lower your risk by changing the factors you can control.

How to protect your heart  
Lloyd-Jones offers these ideas to stay safer:

Know the warning signs: It's important to know the signs of a heart attack — they vary in men and women — and to call 911 immediately. The sooner a person starts receiving treatment, the better the chances of survival and preventing heart damage.

Practice moderation: During the holidays, eat and drink in moderation, try to choose healthy foods and watch your sodium intake.

Look after yourself: Aim to reduce stress from family interactions, finan-



cial struggles, hectic schedules, travel and other challenges during the holidays.

Be sure to exercise: Find creative ways to be active, such as going for a family walk or another fun activity you can do with your loved ones.

Stick to your medications: Busy holidays can lead to skipping medications, forgetting them when away from

home, or not getting refills in a timely manner. It's also important to keep tabs on your blood pressure numbers.

Your heart is one of the most important parts of your body, so it is important that you take good care of it. Luckily, it's something that you can work on with small gradual steps every day. (Source: [BlackDoctor.org](http://BlackDoctor.org) by Jessica Daniels)

## Access Granted: Covering the Cost for Your Meds

NATIONWIDE -- Are you able to cover the cost of your meds? It could easily put a dent in your pockets if you are battling major health challenges.

Let's face it: Coming to terms with the fact that you have a life-long disease can be mentally draining. Trying to figure out how you will be able to afford your medications is an extra layer of stress that can be detrimental to your illness.

Access to affordable medications is a constant struggle for people with sickle cell disease — a disorder of hemoglobin that largely affects African Americans.

The CDC estimates that about 1 in 13 African American births will have sickle cell trait, and about 1 in 365 will have the disease.

The annual cost associated with sickle cell disease can be on average \$10,000 for children. The financial burden dramatically increases as beneficiaries get older and their disease progresses. Adults can expect to pay three times more in costs than children which may cause many to reconsider the kind of treatment they receive.

With the costs of healthcare and medications continuing to escalate, it's important to know your options to avoid suffering in silence. Collaboration and communication with others are key to understanding the resources around you.

Here are a few actions you can take to increase your access to the medications needed to manage your pain crisis:

### Have a Conversation About the Cost of Meds with Your Doctor

When is the last time you had a conversation with your doctor? Remember, your doctor is a trained

resource — use them!

Get in the habit of engaging in open communication with your doctor to understand your options. Don't limit your conversations to just your health concerns. Be upfront about your financial matters as well.

Start by asking your doctor for coupons or free samples. Drug reps provide doctors with these items to enable you to test out medicines before purchasing a full prescription.

Remember, you don't have to sacrifice quality because of your financial situation. If there is a certain medicine you want, then ask your doctor for discounts. Medicines for sickle cell patients have improved significantly in the past few decades and you should be aware of them without worrying about the cost.

Adakveo, an infusion medicine that helps to manage sickle cell pain, was recently released and maybe less of a hassle than taking a daily pill.

The monthly infusion allows doctors to adjust doses as needed and it stays in the system without the drug diminishing completely by the end of the month.

Another smart move is asking your doctor to split your pills. Since some drugs cost the same no matter what the dosage is, you can ask your doctor to provide a prescription for a high-dose pill that you can split in half later.

### Allow Technology to Work for You

The internet can be your best friend when shopping for cost-effective prescription options. Go online, review various websites, or use mobile apps to find the best price options for your medications.



Here are some popular websites you can use to start your research:

- GoodRx.com
- Blink Health
- OneRx
- RetailMeNot Rx Saver
- ScriptSave
- WellRx
- Easy Drug Card
- Search Rx

GoodRx is a popular site that allows you to compare prices and get free coupons. Blink Health allows you to input what medicine you need while the algorithm searches for the lowest price.

Download the OneRx app to instantly save on your prescription medications with or without insurance. The internet showcases many apps and websites that can help you save thousands of dollars a year.

Use these resources and start saving today!

### Choose a Plan that Meets Your Needs and Helps With Cost of Meds

Understand your health insurance plan. Don't just check the box

on a plan that sounds good. Make sure it's a good fit for you so that you can get access to the meds you need.

When you re-enroll in your plan this year, determine if a PPO (preferred provider organization), POS (point of service), (EPO) exclusive provider organization, or HMO (health maintenance organization). The plan to select will determine your premium, co-pays, and out-of-pocket costs for prescriptions.

Your policy may also include free services and discounts that you aren't aware of. Some health insurance companies may cover alternative treatments that can help you manage your symptoms.

There are additional money and resources available to help you cover the cost of your meds. Do your research and connect with professionals who can expose you to your options so that financial worries won't stop you from getting the monetary relief you deserve. ([BlackDoctor.org](http://BlackDoctor.org) by Charlene Rhinehart)