

HEALTH

Older Americans Can Expect Higher Drug Prices in 2022

By Nadia Ramlagan

Older adults will likely shell out more for healthcare costs in 2022. Medicare beneficiaries will see their premiums for ‘Part B,’ which covers doctor and urgent-care visits, increase by more than 14%, on top of increasing prescription drug prices.

Richard Frank, senior fellow in economic studies at the Brookings Institution, explained a provision outlined in President Joe Biden’s Build Back Better Act would pe-

nalize companies for raising their prices faster than overall economic growth.

It is a change he believes would help rein in companies’ price hikes and save people money.

“We can save a lot of money on drugs that don’t add that much to our therapeutic arsenal, and continue to reward the drugs that do,” Frank asserted.

Pharmaceutical companies argued a limit on prices would stifle innovation, slowing the discovery of new cures for diseases, but there

is evidence Medicare recipients who see hikes in their pharmacy bills are less likely to fill prescriptions, and skipping refills is linked to around a 33% increase in deaths, according to a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

A survey by the group Small Business for America’s Future found lowering healthcare and prescription costs for employees is a top priority for small business owners. Frank pointed out drug costs have far surpassed inflation, and are hitting consumers and small busi-

nesses at a time when the pandemic has further increased healthcare costs.

“So, for the last several years, prices have been going up for prescription drugs at a rate that is around three times that of inflation,” Frank noted.

The Build Back Better Act would allow the government to negotiate prices with drug companies for certain drugs covered under Medicare Parts ‘B’ and ‘D,’ but the bill stalled in the U.S. Senate in December.

Report Ranks Tennessee 41st for Health Outcomes

By Mary Schuermann Kuhlman

A new report provides insight into what Tennessee could focus on in the New Year to improve the health of its residents.

The America’s Health Rankings 2021 report from UnitedHealthcare ranks Tennessee a dismal 41st among states for health outcomes. The state’s notable challenges include high numbers of smokers and people with multiple chronic health conditions, as well as high levels of mental distress.

The report also reveals a 20% increase in obesity among Tennesseans in the past decade.

Dr. Matthew Spann, weight loss surgeon and director of surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, believes obesity is endemic, and needs to be addressed from a healthcare standpoint.

“Obesity is a disease just like

high blood pressure and high cholesterol,” Spann explained. “It has a genetic component, it has an environmental component, and it’s associated with many other health problems that ultimately can shorten your life.”

Tennessee’s obesity rate is 35.6%, compared with about 32% nationally. The state received positive marks in the report for low rates of excessive drinking and a high high-school graduation rate. Also, fewer adults are reporting insufficient sleep and fewer are avoiding healthcare due to cost.

Adequate nutrition and physical activity also are areas of concern, as Tennessee ranked 32nd in those categories.

Spann contended the conveniences of modern society are somewhat to blame.

“Healthy food choices have become more and more limited,



especially as there’s a greater gravity towards fast foods, which have a little bit less nutritional value,” Spann asserted. “We’ve also seen the rise in sedentary lifestyles, less physical activity.”

The research also found an uptick in deaths between 2019 and 2020 nationwide.

Dr. Ravi Johar, chief medical officer of UnitedHealthcare, said the pandemic contributed about

70% of the death-rate increase, but more people died from causes such as stroke or cancer as well.

“We had a 17% increase in the death rate, and that 17% doesn’t even reflect some populations,” Johar outlined. “We know Hispanics and African Americans, the death rate was even higher than that.”

Tennessee ranks 38th among the states for its mortality rate.

In Memoriam: The Black Press Of America Remembers Those We Lost In 2021

As the calendar turns to a new year and COVID remains as deadly today as the pandemic’s start nearly two years ago, the National Newspaper Publishers Association pauses to remember the icons and others we said farewell to in 2021.

From the stunning death of Supremes co-founder and Black Press friend Mary Wilson to the loss of DMX, Colin Powell, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, 2021 featured some of the saddest and most unexpected farewells.

“I was extremely shocked and saddened to hear of the passing of a major member of the Motown family, Mary Wilson of the Supremes,” Berry Gordy, Motown Records’ founder, remarked.

“The Supremes were always known as the ‘sweethearts of Motown.’ Along with Diana Ross and Florence Ballard, Mary came to Motown in the early 1960s.

After an unprecedented string of No. 1 hits, television, and nightclub bookings, they opened doors for themselves, the other Motown acts, and many, many others. ... I was always proud of Mary. She was quite a star in her own right and over the years continued to

work hard to boost the legacy of the Supremes. Mary Wilson was extremely special to me. She was a trailblazer, a diva, and will be deeply missed.” Two months after Wilson’s death, hip-hop icon DMX died in New York at 50.

DMX, whose real name was Earl Simmons, banged out hits like “Party Up in Here,” and “X Gon’ Give It to Ya,” also starred in the groundbreaking movie, “Belly,” which featured the iconic scene where Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., saves his character’s life. Dr. Chavis is the president and CEO of the NNPA. Simmons also made his mark in films like “Exit Wounds,” “Cradle 2 the Grave,” and “Romeo Must Die.”

“Earl was a warrior who fought till the very end,” read a family statement. “He loved his family with all of his heart, and we cherish the times we spent with him. Earl’s music inspired countless fans across the world, and his iconic legacy will live on forever. We appreciate all of the love and support during this incredibly difficult time. Please respect our privacy as we grieve the loss of our brother, father, uncle, and the



Left to right: Gen. Colin Powell, Cicely Tyson and Hank Aaron were among famous people lost in 2021.

man the world knew as DMX.”

Music, entertainment, sports, and the business world lost heroes and icons in 2021. While we apologize if we miss anyone in this report, the following count among the deaths that made headlines.

- Actor Michael K. Williams
- Actor Melvin Van Peebles
- Producer Chucky Thompson
- Gen. Colin Powell
- Bishop Desmond Tutu
- Baseball Legend Hank Aaron
- Basketball Legend Elgin Baylor
- College Basketball Coaching Legend John Chaney
- Golf Legend Lee Elder
- Boxing Legend Marvelous Marvin Hagler
- Hip Hop Artist Greg “Shock G” Jacobs, leader for Digital Underground,

- Actor Yaphet Kotto,
- Hip Hop Star, Actor Biz Markie
- Comedian Paul Mooney
- Singer Lloyd Price
- Boxer Leon Spinks
- Singer Dennis Thomas, Kool & the Gang co-founder
- Actress Cicely Tyson
- Musician Bunny Wailer, founding member of The Wailers and collaborator of Bob Marley’s
- Actor Clarence Williams III
- Baseball Legend Jim “Mudcat” Grant
- Olympic Champion Dianne Durham
- Civil Rights Worker, Lawyer Vernon Jordan
- Writer Eloise Greenfield
- Professor and Opera Singer Carmen Balthrop
- Trailblazing Black feminist Bell Hooks

IRS filing, cont’d.

Exempt and Government Entities division. “Electronic filing also shortens IRS processing time so applicants won’t wait as long for a response.”

Organizations requesting determinations under Section 521 are now also able to use the electronic Form 1024 instead of Form 1028, Application for Recognition of Exemption Under Section 521 of the Internal Revenue Code. The required user fee for Form 1024 will remain \$600 for 2022. Applicants must pay the fee through Pay.gov when submitting the form. Payment can be made directly from a bank account or by credit or debit card. Organizations are encouraged to subscribe to Exempt Organizations

Update, a free IRS e-Newsletter, for form updates and other exempt organization news.

As part of the revision, applications for recognition of exemption under Sections 501(c)(11), (14), (16), (18), (21), (22), (23), (26), (27), (28), (29) and 501(d) can no longer be submitted as letter applications. Instead, these requests must be made on the electronic Form 1024. Accordingly, organizations that are described in Section 501(c) (other than 501(c)(3) and (c)(4)) and 501(d) applying for tax-exempt status must now use the electronic Form 1024. Section 501(c)(3) organizations must continue to use Form 1023 or Form 1023-EZ, and Section 501(c)(4)



organizations must continue to use Form 1024-A. Those forms also must be filed electronically.

Additional information on how to apply for IRS recognition of tax-exempt status:

- Applying for Tax-Exempt Status on IRS.gov
- Revenue Procedure 2022-08