



## eHealth Publishes Top Ten Health Insurance Tips for College Students During the 2014-2015 Academic Year

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**According to eHealth Data, the Average Cost of Individually-Purchased Coverage Over Four Years of College Is About \$7,000**

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA -- (Marketwired) -- 09/15/14 -- Today eHealth, Inc. (NASDAQ: EHTH) ([eHealthInsurance.com](http://eHealthInsurance.com)), the nation's first and largest private online health insurance exchange, released health insurance tips for college-aged young adults and data on the cost of purchasing individual coverage while studying for a four-year degree.

"It's back-to-school season and college students and parents are re-examining their health insurance options and the cost of coverage," said Gary Matalucci, eHealth Vice President of Customer Care. "With the 2014 provisions of the Affordable Care Act in place, the health insurance choices available to college students today may be different than those which they faced a year ago. The top ten health insurance tips we've prepared and our data on the cost of individually-purchased coverage should help students and their parents make well-informed health insurance choices for the 2014-2015 school year."

### **Figuring Health Insurance Premiums into Total College Costs**

College can be pricy but be sure to budget the cost of health insurance into your college expenses. Data published in eHealth's May 2014 [Health Insurance Price Index report](#) sheds light on premiums for young adults who purchase coverage on their own. Among young adults ages 18-24 who bought individual plans through eHealth during the last nationwide open enrollment period, eHealth found the following:

- **The average monthly premium was \$146.** This works out to an annual cost of \$1,752 or a total cost of \$7,008 over the course of four years.
- **The average annual deductible was \$4,955.** This may sound like a burden, but annual checkups, many preventive care services and women's health services are typically covered with no out-of-pocket cost.
- **"Catastrophic" plans were the most commonly selected.** While bronze, silver, gold and platinum plans were also available, catastrophic plans meeting the coverage requirements of the law are typically available only to persons under age 30.

For more information about health insurance costs and information on the methodology employed in these determinations, see eHealth's full May 2014 [Health Insurance Price Index report](#).

### **eHealth's Top Ten Health Insurance Tips for College Students**

**1. Know your options, and don't wait to get coverage.** Young adults in the 18-24 age range are historically among those most likely to go uninsured, but if you're a young adult today you may have more coverage options than you know. These may include:

- **Staying on Mom and Dad's plan.** The Affordable Care Act (ACA) allows your parents to keep you enrolled on the family health plan until you turn 26, even if you're not in school or living at home.
- **Buying your own individual health insurance plan.** This is good and often affordable option for many young adults, especially if you're going to school outside of the family health plan's coverage area. You can no longer be declined based on your medical history. Just make sure that you shop during open enrollment or when you've had a qualifying life event.
- **Enrolling in a school-sponsored plan.** Not all colleges and universities offer their own plans, and not all school-sponsored plans are created equal. If you're considering a school-sponsored plan, check whether it limits you to seeing on-campus doctors and whether it meets your coverage requirements under the ACA, saving you from a potential tax penalty.
- **Getting coverage through an employer.** Many college students work at least part-time and many employers offer group health insurance coverage.

**2. Consider alternatives to staying on Mom and Dad's plan.** If you're going to school in another city or state, coverage under a parent's plan may not be a good idea. Many health insurance plans only provide the highest level of coverage when you use their network of preferred doctors and hospitals. Those networks don't always cover a whole state, or extend out of state. Even if you're studying near home, you should get quotes for individual plans and compare these premiums to what it may cost your parents if you were to stay on their plan. You may be able to find more affordable coverage with benefits that still meet your needs when buying your own plan.

**3. Understand the benefits of buying coverage on your own.** As a result of the health care reform law, individual plans now provide more robust benefits and access to more preventive care at no out-of-pocket cost. You can no longer be declined for these sorts of plans and you can keep your plan even when you leave school and go out into the workforce. Work with a licensed agent like eHealth to compare quotes.

**4. Pay attention to open enrollment and special enrollment periods.** Buying coverage on your own is easier now since you can no longer be turned down for health reasons, but you can only buy it during open enrollment or when you experience a qualifying life event. The next nationwide open enrollment period begins November 15, 2014 and is scheduled to continue through February 15, 2015. Qualifying life events include things like losing coverage under an employer or parent's plan or moving to a new coverage area. If you're moving to a new city for college, you may experience a qualifying life event allowing you to shop on your own.

**5. Make sure your health plans meets health care reform requirements.** The health care reform law requires most of us to have health insurance. Make sure any plan you're considering meets the coverage requirements of the ACA. Not just any "health insurance" plan will work. Short-term plans, for example, may still leave you open to a tax penalty. Some limited-benefit school-sponsored plans may do so too, so pay attention and make sure you're getting "major medical health insurance" coverage.

**6. Consider filling coverage gaps with a short-term plan.** If you're unable to get coverage through your parents and haven't experienced a qualifying life event allowing you to enroll in coverage now, look into short-term health insurance. These plans provide limited coverage and can still leave you open to a tax penalty. However, they may provide you with protection against bills resulting from unexpected injury or illness while tiding you over until the nationwide open enrollment period allows you to purchase major medical coverage for 2015.

**7. Concerned about costs? Consider a catastrophic plan.** The ACA allows young people under age 30 to purchase special "catastrophic" plans which provide a valuable layer of basic coverage but tend to have lower monthly premiums than typical health insurance plans. If you're healthy and only rarely visit the doctor, consider a catastrophic plan. Work with a licensed agent to learn more about the options in your area. Catastrophic plans will still meet the coverage requirements of the law and protect you from a tax penalty.

**8. Don't forget dental and vision insurance.** While many colleges require students to have health insurance they typically don't require you to have dental or vision insurance. It's easy to buy these plans on your own, however, and they tend to be affordable. Work with a licensed agent to find the right plan for your needs.

**9. Be sure your health insurance plan covers school sports injuries.** NCAA rules often require college athletes to have health insurance but they don't necessarily require your school to cover you. If you're still insured under your parents' health insurance plan, be aware that some plans may actually exclude coverage for college sports-related injuries. Make sure you understand how your coverage works before you hit the field.

**10. Don't let yourself fall through the cracks as an older student.** Undergraduates and graduate students age 26 and older do not qualify to stay on their parents' health insurance plan, even if they're in school full-time. The ACA limits that option to younger adults. So, if you're age 26 or older -- or if you're going to turn 26 in the middle of the academic year -- it's a good idea to explore other health insurance alternatives now.

#### **About eHealth**

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For more health insurance news and information, visit the eHealth consumer blog: [Get Smart - Get Covered](#) or visit eHealth's Affordable Care Act Resource Center at [www.eHealth.com/affordable-care-act](http://www.eHealth.com/affordable-care-act).

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