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Oregon Health Authority provides a tool for health care consumers: *Helping consumers make informed decisions – a first step toward containing or lowering costs*

Health care costs have been steeply rising over the past decade and account for an increasing portion of the average family budget, making it more important than ever that we have information to help us be smart purchasers. The Oregon Health Authority provides a web tool that allows consumers to make informed decisions. This tool displays the cost of many health care procedures at acute care hospitals across Oregon. Transparency around the cost of health care procedures is a first and critical step toward containing the rising costs of health care.

“In Oregon, medical inflation has grown nearly 8 percent every year for the last five years, more than double the rate of general inflation. The Oregon Health Authority is working to lower or contain these rising costs. This web tool is just one step in providing clear, transparent information to Oregonians,” said Tina Edlund, the Oregon Health Authority’s deputy director.

Public reporting of health care costs is becoming increasingly important to consumers, who can use the reports to make informed health care decisions. This week, the Oregon Health Authority is providing updates to hospital costs for 2009, available with a web-based tool. This tool, first launched in 2007, provides average payments for selected health conditions or procedures for Oregon’s acute-care hospitals.

The newly available data highlight that, even after adjusting for medical inflation, the cost of care for certain conditions has increased dramatically.

- Appendix removal: 25 percent cost increase from 2005 to 2009;
- Congestive heart failure: 24 percent cost increase from 2005 to 2009;
- Diabetes: 37 percent cost increase from 2005 to 2009;
- Hip joint replacement: 26 percent cost increase from 2005 to 2009;
- Major depression and psychoses: 27 percent cost increase from 2005 to 2009.

The cost of having a baby has also increased dramatically.

- Vaginal delivery: 31 percent cost increase from 2005 to 2009;
- Cesarean delivery: 25 percent cost increase from 2005 to 2009.

“As medical costs keep rising, it is important that we continue to enhance the information available to Oregonians,” said Cory Streisinger, director of the Department of Consumer and Business Services. “This web tool and other efforts can help consumers understand why their costs are increasing and guide their decisions.”

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Streisinger added that Oregonians now can receive out-of-pocket cost estimates from their insurance companies. The department's Insurance Division is posting detailed information about health insurance rate requests online at www.cbs.state.or.us/external/ins/insurer/rates_forms/health_rate_filings/health-rate-filing-search.html.

Oregon is one of the first states to publicly report data based on what is actually paid to hospitals. Many states report data based on the hospitals' charges, which are not necessarily the same as what hospitals are paid.

These reports were developed from inpatient insurance claims data for Oregon residents in Oregon's acute care hospitals during calendar years 2005-2009. The state will post this data each year as well as work in the interim to improve the information available on the website.

The Oregon Health Authority and the Insurance Division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services have collaborated on this project. The Department of Consumer and Business Services collects data from insurers. The Oregon Health Authority analyzes and reports this data to provide detailed cost information to the public. The tool is at www.oregon.gov/OHPPR/RSCH/comparehospitalcosts.shtml. This information complements Oregon's public reporting of hospital quality data, which compares hospital mortality rates for selected conditions or procedures, available at www.oregon.gov/OHPPR/HQ/index.shtml.

The Oregon Health Authority is a leader in the effort to innovate for quality and affordable health care in Oregon by improving the health of Oregonians and working to lower the cost of care so it is affordable and accessible to everyone. A nine-member, citizen-led group called the Oregon Health Policy Board works with the Oregon Health Authority. To learn more about OHA, visit www.oregon.gov/OHA. Connect with us at [www.Facebook.com/OregonHealthAuthority](https://www.facebook.com/OregonHealthAuthority) and [www.Twitter.com/OHAOregon](https://www.twitter.com/OHAOregon).

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