

Students are often understandably short on funds
but choosing health insurance coverage
with high deductibles and narrow networks
is not where to cut costs

THE UT SOUTHWESTERN STUDENT'S GUIDE TO HEALTH INSURANCE

UT System Board of Regents require all students at a UT System health-related institution maintain valid major medical health insurance coverage while enrolled. This coverage may be with the UT System-sponsored plan or from another provider.

ACADEMIC HEALTHPLANS

The University of Texas System offers AcademicBlueSM, a student health insurance plan from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas. Academic HealthPlans is the plan administrator for the Student Health Insurance Plan.

ENROLLMENT IN THE STUDENT HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN

All UT Southwestern students will be automatically enrolled in the [AcademicBlueSM Student Health Plan](#) unless a waiver is submitted online and approved. The AcademicBlueSM health insurance premium will be added to your student account. See [student coverage costs](#).

Medical students will be billed the cost of the insurance premium to your student account in two payments (Fall and Spring).

School of Health Professions, Peter O'Donnell School of Public Health, and Graduate School students will be billed the cost of the insurance premium to your student account in three payments (Fall, Spring, and Summer).

SHOULD I STAY ON MY PARENTS HEALTH COVERAGE?

Your parent's health coverage may be fine. But you need to check a few things.

Starting with making sure your parent's insurance is accepted by UT Southwestern providers. Ideally, UT Southwestern providers should be in-network. Check out [Insurance Accepted](#) by UT Southwestern providers.

You'll also want to see what your parent's deductible is and when the policy year for their insurance begins and ends. The deductible is the fixed amount you pay before the insurance plan kicks in for that coverage year. A large deductible means you will pay out-of-pocket until you hit the magic number.

UT Southwestern providers, hospitals and clinics, including the Student Health Center and Student Wellness and Counseling, do not accept [exchange plans purchased on the Health Insurance Marketplace](#) or healthcare sharing plans, either [zero cost share plans](#) or [limited cost share plans](#). Students with these plans will not have coverage when seeking care at any UT Southwestern facilities.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE STUDENT INSURANCE PLAN OPTION

Let's start with this:

*At UT Southwestern,
co-pays for the Student Health Center and Student Wellness
and Counseling are waived for students covered under
the student health plan, AcademicBlueSM*

In many cases, student health plans cost less than other plans – even less than staying on your family plan. And they can provide better benefits such as:

- *Lower cost deductibles and premiums.*
- *Comprehensive benefits, including added services not always found with other plans.*
 - *Greater access to networks of physicians and behavioral health specialists.*

Student plans are designed with students in mind. They're based on a younger, healthier population and provide coverage for a limited time, while you're in school. The Student Health Insurance Plan may surprise you and be cheaper than your parents' plan. Before you choose coverage, see how AcademicBlueSM [compares](#) to your current health insurance plan.

I'M STILL NOT CONVINCED. I'M YOUNG, HEALTHY AND ON A BUDGET. TELL ME AGAIN WHY I SHOULDN'T STAY ON MY PARENT'S INSURANCE.

Let's talk mental health services.

From anxiety, depression, impostor syndrome and other feelings of being out of place, to periods of isolation and to constant short- and long-term deadlines, graduate and medical school presents serious potential challenges to students' mental health. There's also financial strain, navigating complex relationships with advisers and colleagues, the job market, and myriad other worries.

A new study in *Nature Biotechnology* shows that graduate students are more than six times as likely to experience depression and anxiety as compared to the general population. And according to the [New England Journal of Medicine](#), medical students have higher rates of depression, suicidal ideation, and burnout than the general population.

But that's all theoretical. Here are some war stories from our own students.

SCENARIOS YOU NEVER WANT TO BE IN

- ❖ You're a student and you're on your parents' insurance. It's an okay plan, but its deductible is high (\$4000/year). But you're young, healthy, fit, and smart. You were top of your class. And you were smart enough to check out your parents' insurance when you submitted your insurance waiver to Academic Health Plans, so you know UT Southwestern docs are out-of-network. So, you've got this. Until about October, when the exams hit full force. And the stress. And the fear of failure. You're struggling, but you're smart enough to know that. So, you go to Student Wellness and Counseling. You've heard good things. The good news: they can get you in. The bad news: only once at no charge. Then it's out of pocket because your parents' insurance isn't accepted at UT Southwestern. You knew that, but at the time it was one more expense you didn't need to take on. Now it matters. A lot. If you can hang on until January, you can switch insurance plans to AcademicBlueSM, the student health insurance. But January is a long time away, plus you'll have to explain this expense to your parents. You've never failed at anything before, and if you don't get some help, you may fail some of your classes.

- ❖ You moved from out of state to go to school here. You have insurance purchased in your home state and put in a waiver with Academic HealthPlan at the beginning of the term. Everything's going great until you tear your meniscus. You go to the Student Health Center. Bad news: your insurance plan doesn't have coverage in Texas. You call home to see what to do. Your parents tell you to pretend you didn't hurt yourself until you can get home. You do just that. You need knee surgery six months later and have to request a medical leave of absence. So, it's going to take you an extra six months to graduate.
- ❖ You're from a socio-economically at-risk family. Your parents' insurance is an exchange plan, with a whopping \$5,000 deductible. Which is just another way of saying no insurance at all. You are having some adjustment issues and anxiety. You go to Student Wellness and Counseling at a friend's recommendation, but UT Southwestern cannot accept exchange insurance plans. You're faced with an insurance policy with limited mental health benefits and a high deductible. You choose not to continue counseling because of high out-of-pocket costs.

STUDENT COVERAGE BASICS

When it comes to insurance, understanding its language and how it works goes a long way. At least half a dozen variables go into differentiating one policy from another; and each one carries its own financial implications.

It's crucial to understand that a monthly premium is only the beginning of your out-of-pocket cost. Should you need medical treatment, understanding your obligations ahead of time can help you avoid a nasty surprise.

Qualifying Events Coverage: A change in your situation that can make you eligible for a special enrollment period, or qualifying event enrollment period, allowing you to enroll in health insurance outside the open enrollment period. Basic types of qualifying life events: loss of health coverage due to aging off parent's plan (at age 26), loss of job, changes in household due to getting married or divorced, having a baby, adopting a child or death in the family, changes in residence due to moving to a different ZIP code or county, becoming a U.S. citizen or leaving incarceration.

Continuation Coverage: This coverage is available to students who will be graduating or will no longer be a student. To be eligible to enroll in this coverage, students must be enrolled in the previous and current semester. All students and their dependent(s) can purchase a fixed three months of additional medical coverage. (Dental is not available). Continuation coverage must be purchased within thirty-one days of the current coverage termination date. Premium paid directly to AHP.

MUST-KNOW TERMS

To make an informed decision, it's important to understand what you are being offered in exchange for your monthly premium. Before we examine your options in detail, take a moment to familiarize yourself with the basic terminology all insurers use.

Coinsurance: The percentage of costs you pay after your deductible is met. Generally, this is a percentage split by you and your insurance provider; 80/20 splits are common and mean that you are responsible for 20% of costs after the deductible.

Co-pay: Often confused with coinsurance, a co-pay is a fixed amount that you agree to pay toward specified expenses. A common example of a co-pay is the small flat fee you pay each time you visit a doctor or emergency room.

Deductible: A fixed amount that you are expected to pay after you receive treatment to which a deductible applies. After you meet the deductible, your insurance plan covers all or part of your expenses until year's end. In some cases, there may only be a copay.

Group plan: In any insurance plan, all policyholders form a group. Within this group there are likely to be a mix of healthy individuals (most young adults) and those who require more care (seniors or people with chronic illnesses). Insurance companies need to offset the costs of participants who need a higher level of care, and group plans that include healthy people allow them to mitigate this risk and keep overall costs low.

Open enrollment periods: Period when you can enroll in a health insurance plan. These periods differ between plans. Most times, you are given at least a month to enroll.

Network: A group of providers that contractually partner with your insurance carrier. Your insurance plan will incentivize you to choose from this network by charging you less for treatment by these providers.

Premium: What you pay, usually monthly, for your insurance plan. This is a bill and is unrelated to other out-of-pocket expenses you are expected to pay.

Preventive care: Preventive care refers to the treatment of illness before it starts. Vaccinations, certain screening exams and annual checkups all fall under preventive care.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- AcademicBlueSM: How AcademicBlue compares to your current health insurance plan. (https://myahpcare.com/wp-content/uploads/2018-19_AB_TX_SHC_UT_System_Comparison_FLIER-FINAL_copy.pdf)
- Academic HealthPlans website for UT Southwestern students, where you can find plan benefits, costs and enrollment information. (<https://utsouthwestern.myahpcare.com>)
- Academic HealthPlans general website for AcademicBlueSM Student Health Plan, The University of Texas System Endorsed Student Health Insurance Plan. (<https://www.ahpcare.com/>)
- College Student Guide to Choosing Health Insurance Plans: Article addressing affordable health insurance choices for college students. (<https://www.affordablecollegesonline.org/college-resource-center/student-health-insurance/>)
- Consumer Reports' Guide to Health Insurance: Consumer Reports advice on health insurance, including how to purchase a plan and getting the most recent information concerning changes to the Affordable Care Act. (<https://www.consumerreports.org/health-insurance/guide-to-health-insurance/>)
- Healthcare.gov: A go-to site for information about health insurance plans available for purchase through the Health Insurance Marketplace. (<https://www.healthcare.gov/>)
- @HealthCareGov: The official Twitter page of healthcare.gov provides advice on getting health insurance and staying healthy. (<https://twitter.com/HealthCareGov>)
- USA.gov – Health Insurance: Information about health insurance and related topics, including CHIP, COBRA, Medicare and Medicaid. (<https://www.usa.gov/health-insurance>)
- UT Southwestern Health Insurance Coverage Requirements: Requirements and directions for enrolling in the student health plan and submitting a waiver. (<https://www.utsouthwestern.edu/education/students/student-health-service/student-health-insurance.html>)
- UT Southwestern Student Health Insurance FAQs: Enrolling, ID cards, dependents, costs, waivers, leaves of absence and more. (<https://www.utsouthwestern.edu/education/students/student-health-service/student-health-insurance-faq.html>)
- WebMD – Health Insurance and Medicare: This is a detailed section on health insurance, including the basic concepts and how to find a plan. (<https://www.webmd.com/health-insurance/default.htm>)