



Important Changes

Standard mileage rate for 2012. The standard mileage rate allowed for out-of-pocket expenses for your car when you use your car for medical reasons is now 23.5 cents a mile. See Transportation under What Medical Expenses Are Deductible.

What Is the Definition of Medical Care?

Medical care means amounts paid for the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease, and for treatments affecting any part or function of the body. The medical care expenses must be primarily to alleviate or prevent a physical or mental defect or illness. Medical care expenses include the amounts you pay for transportation to get medical care.

What Medical Expenses Are Deductible?

Following is a list of items that you can include in figuring your medical expense deduction. The items are listed in alphabetical order.

Abortion

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for a legal abortion.

Acupuncture

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for acupuncture.

Alcoholism

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for an inpatient's treatment at a therapeutic center for alcohol addiction. This includes meals and lodging provided by the center during treatment. You can also include in medical expenses transportation costs you pay to attend meetings of an Alcoholics Anonymous Club in your community if your attendance is pursuant to medical advice that membership in the Alcoholics Anonymous Club is necessary for the treatment of a disease involving the excessive use of alcoholic liquors.

Ambulance

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for ambulance service.

Artificial Limb

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for an artificial limb.

Artificial Teeth

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for artificial teeth.

Autoette

See Wheelchair, later.

Birth Control Pills

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for birth control pills prescribed by a doctor.

Braille Books and Magazines

You can include in medical expenses the part of the cost of Braille books and magazines for use by a visually-impaired person that is more than the cost of regular printed editions.

Capital Expenses

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for special equipment installed in your home, or for improvements, if their main purpose is medical care for you, your spouse, or a dependent. The cost of permanent improvements that increase the value of the property may be partly included as a medical expense. The cost of the improvement is reduced by the increase in the value of the property. The difference is a medical expense. If the value of the property is not increased by the improvement, the entire cost is included as a medical expense.

Car

You can include in medical expenses the cost of special hand controls and other special equipment installed in a car for the use of a person with a disability.

Special design. You can include in medical expenses the difference between the cost of a regular car and a car specially designed to hold a wheelchair.

Cost of operation. You cannot deduct the cost of operating a specially equipped car, except as discussed under Transportation, later.

Chiropractor

You can include in medical expenses fees you pay to a chiropractor for medical care.

Christian Science Practitioner

You can include in medical expenses fees you pay to Christian Science practitioners for medical care.

Contact Lenses

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for contact lenses needed for medical reasons. You can also include the cost of equipment and materials required for using contact lenses, such as saline solution, enzyme cleaner and storage cases. See Eyeglasses and Eye Surgery, later.

Crutches

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay to buy or rent crutches.

Dental Treatment

You can include in medical expenses the amounts you pay for dental treatment. This includes fees paid to dentists for X-rays, fillings, braces, extractions, dentures, etc.

Disabled Dependent Care Expenses

Some disabled dependent care expenses may qualify as medical expenses or as work-related expenses for purposes of taking a credit for dependent care. You can choose to apply them either way as long as you do not use the same expenses to claim both a credit and a medical expense deduction.

Drug Addiction

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for an inpatient's treatment at a therapeutic center for drug addiction. This includes meals and lodging at the center during treatment.

Drugs

See Medicines, later.

Eyeglasses

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for eyeglasses and contact lenses needed for medical reasons. You can also include fees paid for eye examinations.

Eye Surgery

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for eye surgery to treat defective vision, such as laser eye surgery or radial keratotomy.

Fertility Enhancement

You can include in medical expenses the cost of the following procedures to overcome your inability to have children.

- Procedures such as in vitro fertilization (including temporary storage of eggs or sperm).
- Surgery, including an operation to reverse prior surgery that prevents you from having children.

Founder's Fee

See Lifetime Care—Advance Payments, later.

Guide Dog or Other Animal

You can include in medical expenses the cost of a guide dog or other animal to be used by a visually-impaired or hearing-impaired person. You can also include the cost of a dog or other animal trained to assist persons with other physical disabilities. Amounts you pay for the care of these specially trained animals are also medical expenses.

Health Institute

You can include in medical expenses fees you pay for treatment at a health institute only if the treatment is prescribed by a physician and the physician issues a statement that the treatment is necessary to alleviate a physical or mental defect or illness of the individual receiving the treatment.

Hearing Aids

You can include in medical expenses the cost of a hearing aid and the batteries you buy to operate it.

Home Care

See Nursing Services, later.

Hospital Services

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for the cost of inpatient care at a hospital or similar institution if the main reason for being there is to receive medical care. This includes amounts paid for meals and lodging. Also see Lodging, later.

Laboratory Fees

You can include in medical expenses the amounts you pay for laboratory fees that are part of your medical care.

Lead-Based Paint Removal

You can include in medical expenses the cost of removing lead-based paints from surfaces in your home to prevent a child who has or has had lead poisoning from eating the paint. These surfaces must be in poor repair (peeling or cracking) or within the child's reach. The cost of repainting the scraped area is not a medical expense. If, instead of removing the paint, you cover the area with wallboard or paneling, treat these items as capital expenses. See Capital Expenses, earlier. Do not include the cost of painting the wallboard as a medical expense.

Learning Disability

You can include in medical expenses tuition fees you pay to a special school for a child who has severe learning disabilities caused by mental or physical impairments, including nervous system disorders. Your doctor must recommend that the child attend the school. See Schools and Education, Special, later. You can also include tutoring fees you pay on your doctor's recommendation for the child's tutoring by a teacher who is specially trained and qualified to work with children who have severe learning disabilities.

Legal Fees

You can include in medical expenses legal fees you paid that are necessary to authorize treatment for mental illness. However, you cannot include in medical expenses fees for the management of a guardianship estate, fees for conducting the affairs of the person being treated, or other fees that are not necessary for medical care.

Lifetime Care—Advance Payments

You can include in medical expenses a part of a life-care fee or “founder’s fee” you pay either monthly or as a lump sum under an agreement with a retirement home. The part of the payment you include is the amount properly allocable to medical care. The agreement must require that you pay a specific fee as a condition for the home’s promise to provide lifetime care that includes medical care.

Dependents with disabilities. You can include in medical expenses advance payments to a private institution for lifetime care, treatment, and training of your physically or mentally impaired child upon your death or when you become unable to provide care. The payments must be a condition for the institution’s future acceptance of your child and must not be refundable.

Payments for future medical care. Generally, you are not allowed to include in medical expenses current payments for medical care (including medical insurance) to be provided substantially beyond the end of the year. This rule does not apply in situations where the future care is purchased in connection with obtaining lifetime care of the type described earlier.

Lodging

You can include in medical expenses the cost of meals and lodging at a hospital or similar institution if your main reason for being there is to receive medical care. See Nursing Home, later.

Meals

You can include in medical expenses the cost of meals at a hospital or similar institution if the main purpose for being there is to get medical care. You cannot include in medical expenses the cost of meals that are not part of inpatient care.

Medical Conferences

You can include in medical expenses amounts paid for admission and transportation to a medical conference if the medical conference concerns the chronic illness of yourself, your spouse, or your dependent. The costs of the medical conference must be primarily for and necessary to the medical care of you, your spouse, or your dependent. You must spend the majority of your time at the conference attending sessions on medical information. The cost of meals and lodging while attending the conference is not deductible as a medical expense.

Medical Information Plan

You can include in medical expenses amounts paid to a plan that keeps your medical information so that it can be retrieved from a computer data bank for your medical care.

Medical Services

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for legal medical services provided by:

- Physicians,
- Surgeons,
- Specialists, or
- Other medical practitioners.

Medicines

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for prescribed medicines and drugs. A prescribed drug is one that requires a prescription by a doctor for its use by an individual. You can also include amounts you pay for insulin and diabetic supplies. You may also include in medical expenses amounts you pay for a drug that does not normally require a prescription if it is used to treat a medical condition and is prescribed by a qualified provider.

Controlled substances. You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for controlled substances (such as marijuana, laetrile, etc.) in violation of federal law.

Mentally Retarded, Special Home for

You can include in medical expenses the cost of keeping a mentally retarded person in a special home, not the home of a relative, on the recommendation of a psychiatrist to help the person adjust from life in a special hospital to community living.

Nursing Home

You can include in medical expenses the cost of medical care in a nursing home or home for the aged for yourself, your spouse, or your dependents. This includes the cost of meals and lodging in the home if the main reason for being there is to get medical care. Do not include the cost of meals and lodging if the reason for being in the home is personal. You can, however, include in medical expenses the part of the cost that is for medical or nursing care.

Nursing Services

You can include in medical expenses wages and other amounts you pay for nursing services. Services need not be performed by a nurse as long as the services are of a kind generally performed by a nurse.

Operations

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for legal operations that are not for unnecessary cosmetic surgery. See Cosmetic Surgery under What Expenses Are Not Deductible, later.

Optometrist

See Eyeglasses, earlier.

Organ Donors

See Transplants, later.

Osteopath

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay to an osteopath for medical care.

Oxygen

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for oxygen and oxygen equipment to relieve breathing problems caused by a medical condition.

Prosthesis

See Artificial Limb, earlier.

Psychiatric Care

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for psychiatric care. This includes the cost of supporting a mentally ill dependent at a specially equipped medical center where the dependent receives medical care. See Psychoanalysis, next, and Transportation, later.

Psychoanalysis

You can include in medical expenses payments for psychoanalysis. However, you cannot include payments for psychoanalysis that you must get as a part of your training to be a psychoanalyst.

Psychologist

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay to a psychologist for medical care.

Schools and Education, Special

You can include in medical expenses payments to a special school for a mentally impaired or physically disabled person if the main reason for using the school is its resources for relieving the disability. You can include, for example, the cost of:

- Teaching Braille to a visually impaired child,
- Teaching lip reading to a hearing impaired child, or
- Giving remedial language training to correct a condition caused by a birth defect.

The cost of meals, lodging, and ordinary education supplied by a special school can be included in medical expenses only if the main reason for the child's being there is the resources the school has for relieving the mental or physical disability. You cannot include in medical expenses the cost of sending a problem child to a special school for benefits the child may get from the course of study and the disciplinary methods.

Sterilization

You can include in medical expenses the cost of a legal sterilization (a legally performed operation to make a person unable to have children).

Stop-Smoking Programs

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for a program to stop smoking.

Surgery

See Operations, earlier.

Telephone

You can include in medical expenses the cost and repair of special telephone equipment that lets a hearing-impaired person communicate over a regular telephone.

Television

You can include in medical expenses the cost of equipment that displays the audio part of television programs as subtitles for hearing-impaired persons. This may be the cost of an adapter that attaches to a regular set. It also may be the cost of a specially equipped television that exceeds the cost of the same model regular television set.

Therapy

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for therapy you receive as medical treatment. You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay to an individual for giving “patterning” exercises to a mentally retarded child. These exercises consist mainly of coordinated physical manipulation of the child’s arms and legs to imitate crawling and other normal movements.

Transplants

You can include in medical expenses payments you make for surgical, hospital, laboratory, and transportation expenses for a donor or a possible donor of a kidney or other organ. You cannot include expenses if you did not pay for them. A donor or possible donor can include surgical, hospital, laboratory, and transportation expenses in medical expenses only if he or she pays for them.

Transportation

You can include in medical expenses amounts paid for transportation primarily for, and essential to, medical care.

You can include:

- Bus, taxi, train, or plane fares or ambulance service,
- Transportation expenses of a parent who must go with a child who needs medical care,
- Transportation expenses of a nurse or other person who can give injections, medications, or other treatment required by a patient who is traveling to get medical care and is unable to travel alone, and
- Transportation expenses for regular visits to see a mentally ill dependent, if these visits are recommended as a part of treatment.

You cannot include:

- Transportation expenses to and from work, even if your condition requires an unusual means of transportation, or
- Transportation expenses if, for non-medical reasons only, you choose to travel to another city, such as a resort area, for an operation or other medical care prescribed by your doctor.

Car expenses. You can include out-of-pocket expenses for your car, such as gas and oil, when you use your car for medical reasons. You cannot include depreciation, insurance, general repair, or maintenance expenses. If you do not want to use your actual expenses, you can use a standard rate of 24 cents a mile for use of your car for medical reasons. You can also include the cost of parking fees and tolls.

Trips

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for transportation to another city if the trip is primarily for, and essential to, receiving medical services. You may be able to include up to \$50 per night for lodging. See Lodging, earlier.

Tuition

You can include in medical expenses charges for medical care included in the tuition of a college or private school, if the charges are separately stated in the bill or given to you by the school. See Learning Disability, earlier, and Schools and Education, Special, earlier.

Vasectomy

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for a vasectomy.

Weight-Loss Program

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay to lose weight if it is a treatment for a specific disease diagnosed by a physician (such as obesity, hypertension, or heart disease). This includes fees you pay to join a weight reduction group and attend periodic meetings. But you cannot include membership dues in a gym, health club, or spa. You cannot include the cost of diet food or beverages in medical expenses because that substitutes for what you normally consume to satisfy your nutritional needs. You can include the cost of special food in medical expenses only if:

- 1) The food does not satisfy your normal nutritional needs,
- 2) The food alleviates or treats an illness, and
- 3) The need for the food is substantiated by a physician.

The amount you can include in medical expenses is limited to the amount by which the cost of the special food exceeds the cost of a normal diet.) See also Weight-Loss Program under What Expenses Are Not Deductible, later.

Wheelchair

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for an autoette or a wheelchair used mainly for the relief of sickness or disability, and not just to provide transportation to and from work. The cost of operating and keeping up the autoette or wheelchair is also a medical expense.

Wig

You can include in medical expenses the cost of a wig purchased upon the advice of a physician for the mental health of a patient who has lost all of his or her hair from disease or devastation.

X-ray

You can include in medical expenses amounts you pay for X-rays that you get for medical reasons.

What Expenses Are Not Deductible?

Following is a list of some items that you cannot include in figuring your medical expense deduction. The items are listed in alphabetical order.

Baby Sitting, Child Care, and Nursing Services for a Normal, Healthy Baby

You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for the care of your children even if the expenses enable you to get medical or dental treatment. Also, any expense allowed as a child care credit cannot be treated as an expense paid for medical care. See also Healthy baby under Nursing Services, earlier.

Controlled Substances

You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for controlled substances (such as marijuana, laetrile, etc.), in violation of federal law.

Cosmetic Surgery

Generally, you cannot include in medical expenses the amount you pay for unnecessary cosmetic surgery. This applies to any procedure that is directed at improving the patient's appearance and does not meaningfully promote the proper function of the body or prevent or treat illness or disease. Procedures such as face lifts, hair transplants, hair removal (electrolysis), and liposuction generally are not deductible.

You can include in medical expenses the amount you pay for cosmetic surgery if it is necessary to improve a deformity arising from, or directly related to, a congenital abnormality, a personal injury resulting from an accident or trauma, or a disfiguring disease.

Dancing Lessons

You cannot include the cost of dancing lessons, swimming lessons, etc., even if they are recommended by a doctor, if they are only for the improvement of general health.

Diaper Service

You cannot include in medical expenses the amount you pay for diapers or diaper services, unless they are needed to relieve the effects of a particular disease.

Electrolysis or Hair Removal

See Cosmetic Surgery, earlier.

Funeral Expenses

You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for funerals. However, funeral expenses may be deductible on the decedent's federal estate tax return.

Hair Transplant

See Cosmetic Surgery, earlier.

Health Club Dues

You cannot include in medical expenses health club dues, YMCA dues, or amounts paid for steam baths for your general health or to relieve physical or mental discomfort not related to a particular medical condition. You cannot include in medical expenses the cost of membership in any club organized for business, pleasure, recreation, or other social purpose.

Household Help

You cannot include in medical expenses the cost of household help, such as a doula, even if such help is recommended by a doctor. This is a personal expense that is not deductible. However, you may be able to include certain expenses paid to a person providing nursing-type services. Also, certain maintenance or personal care services provided for qualified long-term care can be included in medical expenses.

Illegal Operations and Treatments

You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for illegal operations, treatments, or controlled substances whether rendered or prescribed by licensed or unlicensed practitioners.

Insurance Premiums for Certain Types of Policies

See Insurance Premiums under What Medical Expenses Are Deductible, earlier.

Maternity Clothes

You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for maternity clothes.

Medical Savings Account (MSA)

You cannot deduct as a qualified medical expense amounts you contribute to an Archer MSA. You cannot deduct qualified medical expenses as an itemized deduction if you pay for them with a tax-free distribution from your Archer MSA. You also cannot use other funds equal to the amount of the distribution and claim a deduction. For more information on Archer MSAs, see Publication 969, Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs).

Nutritional Supplements

You cannot include in medical expenses the cost of nutritional supplements, vitamins, herbal supplements, "natural medicines," etc., unless you can only obtain them legally with a physician's prescription.

Personal Use Items

You cannot include in medical expenses an item ordinarily used for personal, living, or family purposes unless it is used primarily to prevent or alleviate a physical or mental defect or illness.

Swimming Lessons

See Dancing Lessons, earlier.

Weight-Loss Program

You cannot include the cost of a weight-loss program in medical expenses if the purpose of the weight control is not treatment of a specific ailment or disease diagnosed by a physician, but rather to improve your appearance, your general health, or your sense of well-being. Also, you cannot include the cost of diet food items in medical expenses if the food is a substitute for the food you normally consume to satisfy your nutritional needs. See also, Weight-Loss Program under What Medical Expenses Are Deductible, earlier.