

## Loss of Coverage – What Are Your Options?

COBRA is a special rule that helps people keep their health insurance if they lose their job or their work hours are reduced. Normally, when you leave a job, your health insurance from that job ends. But with COBRA, you can choose to keep the same insurance plan for a specific period of time, usually up to 18 months.

### How much does COBRA cost?

COBRA can be expensive. While employed, your employer may have paid a portion of the cost for your health insurance. With COBRA, you will pay both your part and the employer's part, plus a small fee. This means the monthly cost can be much higher than what you paid before.

### What services are covered?

Under COBRA, you remain covered under the same health plan you had while you were working. This means you continue to have the same benefits and can keep going to the same doctors, get the same medicines, and receive the same services, like check-ups, hospitalization, or treatments.

### How do you sign up for COBRA?

- **Notice from employer:** When you leave a job or have reduced hours, your employer will give you a letter or notice explaining COBRA and how to sign up.
- **Electing COBRA:** You usually have 60 days to decide if you want to sign up for COBRA. If you decide to sign up, you will start paying the higher cost to keep your health insurance.
- **Payments:** Once you start COBRA, you will need to keep paying every month to stay covered.

### Other health insurance options

If COBRA is too expensive, you have other ways to get health insurance:

- **Marketplace insurance:** You can go to the Health Insurance Marketplace (like Healthcare.gov) to find a new health plan. Sometimes, you might qualify for discounts, which can make it more affordable.
- **Medicaid:** If your income is low, you might qualify for Medicaid, a program that provides free or low-cost health insurance.
- **Spouse plan:** If you have a spouse (husband, wife, or domestic partner) with a job that offers health insurance, you may be able to join their plan.

### Other health insurance options (continued)

- **Short-term insurance:** This is a type of insurance that lasts for a limited time, such as a few months, until you find a long-term plan. However, these plans typically have limited coverage and may not cover everything you need so it is ESPECIALLY important that you read the plan documents carefully before choosing this option.

Choosing health insurance can be tricky, so it is helpful to compare costs and options before deciding.

## Resources

<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/health-plans/cobra>