

Vote Yes on Prop 79

Cheaper Drugs More Californians Can Count On



Women's Access to Prescription Drugs: High Drug Prices Harmful to Women's Health

Prescription drugs have become an essential part of modern medicine, helping many people to live longer, healthier lives. However, high prescription drug costs keep too many women, including the uninsured, the elderly, and the chronically ill, sicker than they need to be.

Women depend on prescription drugs more than do men.

- Women (56%) are more likely than men (42%) to use a prescription medication on a regular basis. (Women's Health Survey, 2005)
- Nearly 80% of women on Medicare use prescription drugs regularly. (Older Women's League, 2002)

Women are more likely to be uninsured than men. Women work in jobs that are less likely to provide comprehensive healthcare coverage, and are twice as likely as men to work in low-wage technical, sales, and administrative support positions. Women also often forgo professional advancement due to care-giving responsibilities, which can imperil financial security later on.

- Women are less likely than men to have employer-based coverage. (Russell Sage Foundation, 2000)
- Only seven in ten (68%) women age 50 to 64 get job-based coverage (Older Women's League, 2000)
- Nearly 1 million (900,000) women lost their health insurance between 2002 and 2003, compared to just 600,000 men. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004)
- More than 2 million California women are completely without any form of public or private health coverage. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004)

Women often go without needed medications. Many women with chronic conditions report not filling a prescription due to cost, skipping doses, or taking smaller doses to make their medications last longer. Rationing of prescription drugs is particularly common for those without prescription drug coverage.

- One-fifth of California women reported that they didn't fill a prescription last year because of cost, compared to 14% of men. (Women's Health Survey, 2005)
- One-third of California women in poor health reported that they couldn't afford to fill a prescription and over one in four skipped doses or reduced doses of medication to make them last longer. (Women's Health Survey, 2005)
- Four in ten uninsured women and one in six privately insured women in California report that they didn't fill a prescription due to cost in the past 12 months. (Women's Health Survey, 2005)

The high cost of prescription drugs hurts women more than men. Because women have roughly one-half the retirement income of men, prescription drug costs consume a much larger portion of their very limited income.

- Women account for more than 70% of the elderly poor. (Older Women's League, 2004)
- The average woman over age 65 who lives alone spends more of her post-tax income on health care than on food. (Older Women's League, 2004)
- Over one-third of women compared to less than one-quarter of men reported either cutting back on necessities, increasing their debt, or rationing their medications due to high prescription drug costs. (Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 2005)

- One quarter of seniors report forgoing prescription medications in past year because of cost while more than one-third reported cost-related non-adherence. (Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 2005)
- Increased cost-sharing for prescription drugs in elderly persons and welfare recipients leads to a reduction in the use of essential drugs and a higher rate of serious illnesses and emergency room visits. (JAMA, 2001).

Proposition 79 would create a prescription drug discount card in California for the working uninsured, seniors, and people with high medical costs.

Proposition 79 is supported by a host of health, women's, senior and consumer organizations, including the League of Women Voters, Consumers' Union and California NOW.

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Paid for by Yes on 79, a coalition of consumer, senior, labor and health organizations and Consumers Union of U.S., Inc