



7 Ways to Get More Bang for Your Caregiver Buck!

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In today's economy, a little serious attention to your spending habits can bring significant benefits to your checkbook and peace of mind. The key is to review the main drains on your budget and create savings in those areas. Small-to-medium adjustments can produce major \$\$\$ increases in your purchasing power.

Start with these five categories and let your imagination take over. If you create a plan and stick to it, you'll feel powerful and regain enough control to uncover many other areas for savings.

1. **Medications:** Be honest with your physician: if you don't have insurance, say so. More & more physicians are offering a "cash" price. Have a frank discussion about medication costs: ask for medication samples of prescriptions you currently use as well as new ones. Ask if there is a more cost effective drug or a higher dose you can purchase and cut in half. NEVER cut pills in half without medical permission. Google: *medication assistance programs* to research whether you qualify for a prescription assistance plan.



2. **Medical Supplies:** Shop online for discount prices and ask your local medical supply store whether it will match those prices. Stay alert: if it sounds too good to be true, pass on the offer!
3. **Groceries:** Most foods are less expensive when bought in bulk. Ask family, neighbors, or friends to split orders & the shopping (gas & time savings) with you. When you cook, cook extra portions and freeze for Mom or for your future meals. Look for coupons in the newspaper or Google Grocery Coupons online. Ask if your store accepts competitors' coupons. Build meals around store specials. Try store brands: they are generally less expensive and frequently have identical ingredients. Plan your meals, take a grocery list to the store with you, and stick to it. Impulse buying is very expensive.
4. **Entertainment:** Your public library is a wonderful resource for free DVD and VCR movies to help eliminate the expense of premium TV channels. Even if you've stopped reading, join a book club. You'll begin reading again (remember the library is free), socialize, and enjoy an evening or afternoon's entertainment at no charge. Check on line, in the newspaper, and at your public library for free events in your area. Eat out less and when you do, you'll save a great deal by checking the restaurant website for coupons and taking advantage of early bird, week-day, or two-for-one specials.
5. **Electricity costs:** Change your AC/Heating filters every month and secure (use easily removable putty) the areas that let in outside heat or cold. Adapt your in-home clothing to stay cooler or warmer so you can turn the temp up or down at least one or two degrees.



Use energy efficient light bulbs and turn off the lights, computers, TV, and other electric equipment when they aren't in use. If you need power for medical equipment, ask your power company if you qualify for a billing reduction. If you qualify as a "low income household," check with your power company for assistance programs.

6. **General:** Change to a "cash only" household. Research shows that people who use cash instead of credit cards spend less. Take advantage of consignment stores for clothing purchases and consign the clothes you and your family no longer wear. Use the profits for new clothes. Pay close attention to health insurance claims: the percentage of denied insurance claims keeps climbing. You can save thousands of dollars by reading your policy and questioning the insurance provider as to why your claim was denied. First step: ask your doctor's office to verify the code they submitted for reimbursement was accurate to the service performed.
7. **Support:** Join a caregiver support group. Chose a group relating to your loved one's illness. You can always count on experienced caregivers for solutions to everyday problems that you won't find anywhere else.