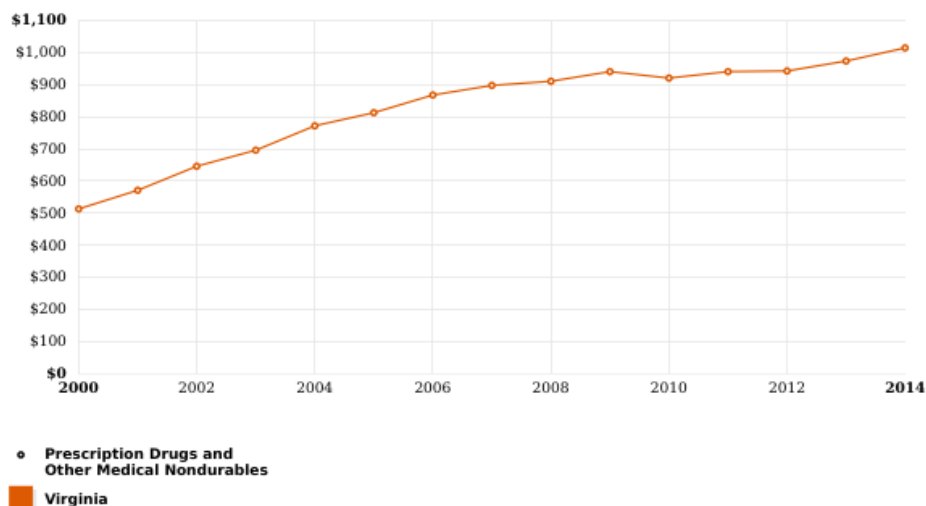


## Virginians are struggling to afford the cost of prescription drugs

- **AARP: Average Annual Prescription Drug Costs for Virginians Rose 26.3 Percent From 2015-2019.** “From 2015 to 2019, average annual prescription drug costs for Virginians rose 26.3 percent, while incomes increased by only 16.7 percent a year, according to an AARP analysis.” [states.aarp.org, [11/1/21](#)]
- **Virginians Fill An Average Of About 11 Prescription Drugs At Pharmacies Annually.** According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Virginia residents filled an average of 11.1 retail prescription drugs at pharmacies per capita in 2019 - close to the national average of 11.6, but exceeding averages in Maryland (10.6) and the District of Columbia (9.4). [[kff.org](#)]
- **Virginians’ Average Drug Expenditures Have Steadily Increased.** According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ June 2017 report on National Health Expenditure Data, Virginia residents’ annual expenditures on “prescription drugs and other medical nondurables” (which includes over-the-counter drugs and medical sundries like surgical dressing, needles, thermometers, etc.) rose steadily over the years examined, exceeding \$1,000 in 2014:

Health Care Expenditures per Capita by Service by State of Residence: Prescription Drugs and Other Medical Nondurables, 2000 - 2014



SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation's State Health Facts.

[[kff.org](#)]

- **One in Four Virginians Report Skipping Prescription Purchases, Doses.**

In August 2021, the Wason Center for Civic Leadership at Christopher Newport University conducted a survey of 800 likely Virginia voters for the AARP. 24 percent of respondents answered that within the past two years they had decided “not to fill a prescription” given by a doctor. [[states.aarp.org](#)]

In March – April 2019, SSI Research Now conducted a survey of 1,172 Virginians for the Altarum Consumer Healthcare Experience State Survey. 27 percent of respondents reported that they had either not filled a prescription or had cut pills in half/skipped a dose due to concerns about drug costs. [Data Brief No. 57, October 2019, [healthcarevaluehub.org](http://healthcarevaluehub.org)]

- **Nearly Two-Thirds of Likely Virginia Voters Reported Being “Concerned” About Their Ability To Afford Prescription Medications.** In response to the AARP’s August 2021 survey, “Nearly two out of three (62%) likely Virginia voters say they are concerned about being able to afford the cost of prescription medication for themselves or a family member. Women (66%), voters between the ages of 50-64 (67%), and Virginians in the South/Southwest region (71%) show the highest levels of concern.” [[states.aarp.org](http://states.aarp.org)]
- **Fredericksburg Man’s Medication Soared From \$1,300 To \$2,800 After Hospitalization, Loss Of Insurance.** In October 2021, Dr. Patrick Neustatter, medical director of the Moss Clinic in Fredericksburg, wrote a piece for the Free Lance-Star detailing the story of “C.M.,” a patient who had lost his job after becoming increasingly ill and losing his health insurance because of it: “This patient was C.M., a 45-year-old Black man with Crohn’s disease... Crohn’s causes erosion of the intestinal lining, but he’d been on Remicade, a new biologic medication that blocks the inflammatory reaction. He had been doing pretty well, he told me. Then he experienced the ‘Catch-22’ of American medicine. He got sick to the point where he couldn’t work, lost his job, and with it, of course, his health insurance... without insurance, Remicade costs \$1,300 a pop, and it has to be given as an infusion every two weeks. And when you add the price of administration, it puts the cost up to about \$2,800.” [Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star, [10/30/21](http://www.freelancestar.com/2021/10/30/21)]
- **Cost Of Henrico Teenager’s Epinephrine Injector Increased “More Than Tenfold.”** “In a June 2021 letter to the editor, Henrico resident Delilah Alexander wrote, “Rising costs for life-saving medications far have outpaced inflation, and people routinely have to choose between things such as paying the rent or medication. My teenage son must carry an epinephrine injector with him at all times to protect him from anaphylaxis. The cost for the injector has increased more than tenfold during his short lifetime.” [Richmond Times-Dispatch, [6/6/21](http://www.richmond.com/news/local/henrico/2021/06/06/21)]
- **Danville Man Described \$900 Insulin Bill.** “In December 2020, WDBJ interviewed Joshua Hearne, a Type 1 Diabetic, who described a trip in 2018: “[The pharmacist] came back over the intercom and she said 'do you know how much this is going to be?' and I said, 'I have a bad feeling about it,'” said the Danville resident. In total, his bill was nearly \$900 for a drug Hearne needs to survive. ‘And I was struck, just frozen,’ said Hearne. ‘Cause what she's asking is, do you want to pay this or do you want to get really, really sick and maybe die?’ [...] ‘It's scary to have your life and wellbeing tied to a single drug,’ said Hearne. Hearne counts himself as lucky. Though it's been tricky at times, he's been able to afford his insulin. He says now, more states, and the federal government, need to step up to help.” [WDBJ, [12/30/20](http://www.wdbj.com/news/local/danville/2020/12/30/20)]

## Disease Prevalence in Virginia

According to the United Health Foundation’s annual “America’s Health Rankings” analysis of state data, as of 2020, 9.3 percent of Virginia adults had three or more chronic health conditions: “arthritis, asthma, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease (heart disease, heart attack or stroke), cancer (excluding skin), depression and diabetes.” This ranks slightly higher than the national average of 9.1 percent. [[americashealthrankings.org](http://americashealthrankings.org)]

**Asthma**

- As of 2019, CDC estimated 586,339 Virginia adults had current asthma. [[cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)]

**Cancer**

- In 2018, the most recent year for which incidence data is available, 40,108 new cancer cases were reported in Virginia. [US Cancer Statistics, [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)]

**Diabetes**

- According to CDC data, as of 2018, 701,793 Virginia adults had diagnosed diabetes, up from 465,389 ten years earlier. [[cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)]

**Pharmaceuticals are a multi-billion business in Virginia**

- **Retail Prescription Drug Sales In Virginia Exceeded \$9.3 Billion In 2019 - A 54% Increase Over Five Years.**

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, in 2019 Virginia retail sales for prescription drugs were \$9,342,756,183, (encompassing commercial insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, and cash sales). [[kff.org](http://kff.org)]

That represents a 53.98% increase from 2014, when KFF data showed Virginia’s total sales for retail prescription drugs were \$6,067,364,675. [[Ballotpedia.org](http://Ballotpedia.org)]

- **Pharmaceutical Companies Have Received At Least \$12.7 Million In Virginia Grants, Incentives, And Subsidies:**

Recipient	Amount	Year	Source
Merck	\$1,300,000	2016	<a href="#">Virginia Investment Partnership</a>
Merck	\$450,000	2016	<a href="#">Virginia Jobs Investment Program</a>
Abbott Laboratories	\$708,000	2016	<a href="#">Town of Altavista</a>
Abbott Laboratories	\$567,000	2016	<a href="#">Campbell County</a>
Abbott Laboratories	\$300,000	2016	<a href="#">Virginia Investment Partnership</a>
Abbott Laboratories	\$240,000	2016	<a href="#">Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund</a>
Abbott Laboratories	\$65,639	2016	<a href="#">Virginia Jobs Investment Program</a>
Abbott Laboratories	\$34,078	2016	<a href="#">Virginia Jobs Investment Program</a>
Fareva	\$147,360	2017	<a href="#">Real Property Investment Grant</a>

Fareva	\$800,000	2012	<a href="#">Virginia Investment Partnership</a>
Fareva	\$650,000	2012	<a href="#">Governor's Opportunity Fund</a>
Fareva	\$175,000	2012	<a href="#">Virginia Jobs Investment Program</a>
Barr Laboratories	\$500,000	2008	<a href="#">Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund</a>
Barr Laboratories	\$500,000	2008	<a href="#">Virginia Investment Partnership</a>
Barr Laboratories	\$400,000	2008	<a href="#">Governor's Opportunity Fund</a>
Barr Laboratories	\$400,000	2008	<a href="#">Bedford County</a>
Covance	\$1,500,000	2007	<a href="#">Virginia Investment Partnership</a>
Covance	\$1,000,000	2007	<a href="#">Governor's Opportunity Fund</a>
Wyeth Pharmaceuticals	\$2,000,000	2005	<a href="#">Virginia Investment Partnership</a>
Merck	\$500,000	2005	<a href="#">Virginia Investment Partnership</a>
Barr Laboratories	\$200,000	2002	<a href="#">Governor's Opportunity Fund</a>
Barr Laboratories	\$100,000	2002	<a href="#">Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund</a>
Abbott Laboratories	\$200,000	2002	<a href="#">Tobacco Region Opportunity Fund</a>

- The Pharmaceutical Industry Has Given Over \$4 Million In Campaign Contributions In Virginia Since 2011, Spent Over \$600,000 Lobbying In Past Two Years Alone.** According to searches of the Virginia Public Access Project, pharmaceutical companies and industry trade associations spent at least \$270,658 in lobbying expenditures in Virginia from May 2020 – April 2021, and \$333,692 from May 2019 – April 2020. The same groups have given at least \$4,035,479 in campaign contributions to Virginia candidates and committees since 2011. The Pharmaceutical Research & Manufacturers alone contributed \$955,385 during that time period. [vpap.org](http://vpap.org)

### Prescription Medications Push Up Insurance Costs

**Health Affairs Report: “Prescription Medications Account For One In Four Dollars Spent By A Commercial Health Plan.”** An August 2018 report in Health Affairs analyzed 2011 – 2016 annual spending on prescription medications by Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, finding that “spending net of rebates by this commercial health plan on outpatient prescription medications, including those administered in physicians’ offices, has increased to a quarter of all health care spending, largely due to increasing prices of specialty medications.” The report authors concluded that “rising pharmaceutical spending in the absence of cost offsets will lead to higher premiums and deductibles, higher member cost sharing, or both—all of which threaten affordability of health insurance and health care, decrease equity in access to care, and may harm health.” [HealthAffairs.org, [8/24/18](#)]