# Start Planning Now for 2027 Healthcare Costs

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What employers should know in 2026, and how **early action can create more options**

## Healthcare costs are projected to rise 9% in 2027

PwC projects the **highest commercial medical cost trend in 17 years.** For employers, that may mean greater pressure on premiums, plan design, and benefit budgets. Planning now gives you more time to understand your options and make thoughtful decisions before renewal deadlines.

## What employers can do now

Rising costs are challenging, but they don't leave employers without choices. Early engagement with your broker creates time to compare strategies, support participation, and avoid rushed decisions.

### Start the renewal conversation early

Review claims, utilization, enrollment, and current plan performance well before renewal. An earlier start gives your broker more time to identify cost drivers and develop alternatives.

### Compare more than one benefits strategy

Ask your broker to model the options available to your business. That may include changes to plan design or contribution strategy, different carriers, group coverage, an ICHRA, or a combination of solutions.

### Engage employees before open enrollment

Clear, timely education can help employees understand the value of their benefits and make informed choices. Stronger communication can support participation and reduce last-minute confusion.

### Look beyond premium alone

Consider network access, prescriptions, out-of-pocket costs, employee needs, and administrative impact alongside the monthly rate. The lowest premium isn't always the best overall fit.

## Five factors pushing costs higher

### 1 Rising pharmacy costs

Specialty drugs and growing use of GLP-1 medications are **increasing pharmacy spending faster than overall medical costs**. Traditional drug-list controls may not be enough on their own.

### 2 More precise documentation and billing

AI-supported tools are helping providers document patient complexity and code services more precisely. In the near term, that can increase the amount paid for care.

70%

**Seventy percent of health plans ranked these tools among their top three cost drivers.**

### 3 Inflation and provider consolidation

Higher labor and operating costs are putting pressure on provider organizations. Consolidation can also reduce competition and give health systems more negotiating leverage, contributing to higher reimbursement rates.

### 4 Continued demand for behavioral healthcare

**Behavioral health claim utilization rose 62.6% from 2018 to 2024.** As more members seek care and remain in treatment longer, behavioral health is expected to remain a meaningful source of cost growth.

62.6%

### 5 Higher out-of-network payments

The No Surprises Act dispute process is contributing to higher out-of-network reimbursement. Providers have prevailed in **88%** of resolved disputes, adding another source of pressure on plan costs.

88%

## Get ahead of rising costs with expert guidance.

Decisely can help you review your current benefits, explore different strategies, and prepare for 2027 with a plan that works for your business and your people.

Visit **decisely.com** or contact your Decisely representative to start the conversation.