



Know Your Rights



Maximizing SNAP Benefits The Medical Expense Deduction

Special SNAP rule for Older Adults (age 60+) and Persons with Disabilities:

If you have out-of-pocket medical costs and low SNAP benefits (food stamps), you may qualify for more SNAP! The maximum SNAP benefit for 1 person is \$192/month.

Older adults (60+) and persons with disabilities who have **at least \$35 per month** in out-of-pocket medical costs get a special medical deduction when DTA calculates the SNAP. Tell DTA if you have at least \$35 per month in out-of-pocket medical expenses!

EXAMPLE: Jane is 78 and gets \$1,000 in Social Security. She pays \$300/month in rent, plus AC. Jane's SNAP is \$95/month. She sends DTA proof of \$50 she pays every month in co-pays. Jane's SNAP increases to \$165 per month!

What medical costs can I claim?

- Basic care:** Bills for any medical, dental, mental health, physical therapy, hospital based care, home health and nursing care not covered by your insurance.
Insurance premiums, prescription co-payments, or deductibles.
- Alternative care:** Acupuncture, chiropractor, homeopathy, or other treatments recommended by your licensed health practitioner.
- Health care supplies and equipment:** Special creams, ointments, pain magnets, incontinence supplies, commodes or other supplies and/or equipment recommended by your licensed health practitioner.
- Over-the-counter or "medicine chest" items:** Pain relievers, insulin, antacids, vitamins, allergy pills other remedies recommended by your licensed health practitioner.
- Mileage or the cost of public transport:** You can claim the federal mileage rate for the miles you drive to appointments or to pick up drugs at the pharmacy. You can also claim costs for parking or a taxi ride, bus, subway or train.
- Housekeeper or caregiver expenses:** Housekeeping or a care attendant to care for you because of your age or disability.
- Vision or hearing devices:** Eyeglasses, contacts, hearing aides (including batteries) speech or communication equipment (including monthly usage fees).

How will proving medical costs with DTA help my SNAP?

If you get the maximum amount of SNAP for your household (\$192/month for one person) telling DTA about medical costs will not make a difference. If you get less than the maximum amount of SNAP, proving medical costs could make a big difference!

- If your medical costs are more than **\$35/month**, DTA will give you a *standard \$155 deduction*. This can make a big difference in your SNAP benefit amount!
- If your medical costs are more than **\$190/month**, DTA will give you a deduction for the *actual amount*. There is **no cap** on what you can claim. This includes large one-time bills!

You can claim medical costs you have, even if you are not able to pay them right now. For example, if you have a \$2,000 dental bill but you can't afford payments, the bill still counts with DTA as a medical cost.

How do I prove my medical costs?

You can claim medical costs on your application or at any point while you are getting SNAP. You do not need to wait! You can send DTA things like the following:

- Rent calculation worksheet from a housing authority. For more information, go to: Masslegalservices.org/HousingSNAPguide
- Copies of ongoing or one-time medical bills
- Health insurance premiums
- Pharmacy print out of the prescription co-payments from the last few months
- Medical appointment letters that show the dates you traveled. You can also tell DTA by phone if you travel by car to your appointments.
- Receipts for over-the-counter "medicine chest" items

To send DTA documents:

Fax: 617 887 8765

Mail: DTA Document Processing Center, PO Box 4406, Taunton, MA 02780

DTA's mobile app: DTA Connect
In person at a local DTA office

How do I prove transportation costs?

You can get credit for the miles you drive (at the federal mileage rate—53.5 cents/mile as of Jan. 2017) as well as out-of-pocket parking and tolls, or the monthly cost of taxis, vans, or public transportation needed to get to medical appointments. **You have a right to verbally self-declare these transportation expenses.** Call DTA at **1-877-382-2363** and tell a worker the addresses of your appointments and how often you go.

What are my rights if I am denied the medical deduction?

- Call the DTA Assistance Line at **1-877-382-2363** to talk with a SNAP worker. If you disagree with what the SNAP worker says, you can also ask to speak to a Supervisor or the Office Director.
- Call the DTA Ombudsman's office at **617-348-5354** and ask them to review the case.
- Request a hearing if you disagree with DTA's decision. You can have the hearing by phone or in person.
- Contact your local Legal Services office for help or more information: www.masslegalhelp.org