

Buying private healthcare insurance directly in the U.S.

How to buy

1. Decide Where You Want to Buy Coverage

You can buy private insurance in **three possible places**:

A. The Health Insurance Marketplace ([Healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) or your state exchange)

- This is where most individuals shop for private plans.
- You may qualify for **subsidies (tax credits)** that make premiums much cheaper.
- Plans follow ACA rules (no denial for pre-existing conditions, coverage minimums, etc.).
- Enrollment is limited to **Open Enrollment** or a **Special Enrollment Period**.

B. Directly From a Private Insurance Company (Off-Exchange Plans)

- These are ACA-compliant plans sold directly by insurers.
- No subsidies are available.
- Sometimes the provider networks differ from marketplace plans.

C. Through a Licensed Health Insurance Broker or Agent

- Brokers compare plans across multiple insurers.
- They can help you enroll in **Marketplace or off-Marketplace** plans.
- There is **no extra cost** to you.

2. Choose the Type of Plan

Typical private plan structures:

- **HMO** — Lower cost, more restrictions, requires referrals.
- **PPO** — Higher cost, more freedom to choose doctors.
- **EPO** — Middle ground: no out-of-network coverage but no referrals.
- **HDHP** — High deductible, low premium, paired with a Health Savings Account

How to buy (cont.)

3. Compare the Costs

Private plans always list these costs: **Monthly premium** (what you pay every month); **Deductible** (what you pay before the plan starts paying); **Out-of-pocket max** (your annual financial ceiling); **Copays / coinsurance**; **Provider network** (which doctors/hospitals are included); **Prescription coverage**

4. Submit an Application and Enrollment

To enroll, you'll need: Your income estimate (AGI for subsidy eligibility); Social Security number; Immigration status documentation (if applicable); Details on any employer coverage offered to you; Household information

Note: Marketplace plans require payment of the first premium before coverage begins.

5. Coverage Start Dates

- Plans purchased during **Open Enrollment** typically start **January 1**.
- Plans purchased due to a **Special Enrollment Period** (marriage, move, job loss) usually start the **1st of the next month** after you enroll.

What it costs?

| Age | Cost | Age | Cost |
|-----|-------|-----|---------|
| 20 | \$471 | 50 | \$868 |
| 30 | \$552 | 60 | \$1,319 |
| 40 | \$621 | 64+ | \$1,458 |

2025 monthly cost for Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace “benchmark” plans in Silver tier coverage. Source: [ValuePenguin](https://www.valuepenguin.com)

Buying Long-Term Care (LTC) insurance

Types of policies

- **Traditional LTC Insurance**
 - Lowest cost for the amount of coverage
 - Premiums can increase; “use it or lose it”
- **Hybrid LTC + Life Insurance**
 - Guaranteed premiums; pays death benefit if LTC not used
 - Higher upfront cost
- **Life Insurance with LTC/Chronic Illness Rider**
 - Uses death benefit to pay for care
 - Good add-on if you already need life insurance
- **Annuity-Based LTC**
 - Single deposit that’s multiplied for LTC benefits
 - Easier underwriting for older adults
- **Short-Term Care Insurance (up to 1 year)**
 - Low cost and easy to qualify
 - Limited protection

How to choose?

- **Best price:** Traditional LTC
- **Want guaranteed premiums + no “use it or lose it”:** Hybrid LTC
- **Already buying life insurance:** Add LTC rider
- **Have health issues or are older (70+):** Annuity-based or short-term care
- **Don’t forget inflation protection (3%–5% compound)** for policies purchased in your 50s–60s.

Where to buy?

1. Independent Insurance Agents / Brokers
2. Captive Agents
3. [Online Marketplaces / Comparison Tools](#)
4. [Employer or Association Plans](#)
5. Direct from Insurers
6. State Insurance Department / Long-Term Care Partnership Programs

Top-Rated LTC Insurance Companies (2025)

- Mutual of Omaha
- Thrivent Financial
- National Guardian Life (NGL)
- New York Life
- Genworth
- MassMutual (Massachusetts Mutual)
- John Hancock

What it costs?

Based on surveys of leading insurance carriers, here are some average annual premium estimates for a traditional policy with an initial benefit of around \$165,000 (which typically grows with inflation protection). Long-term care insurance costs vary widely based on several factors, including your age, health, gender, and the level of coverage you choose.

| Status | Age | Estimated Average Annual Premium |
|-------------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| Single Male | 55 | \$1,750 - \$2,075 |
| Single Female | 55 | \$2,800 - \$3,700 |
| Couple (Combined) | 55 | \$2,080 - \$5,025 |
| Single Male | 65 | \$1,700 - \$3,135 |
| Single Female | 65 | \$2,700 - \$5,265 |
| Couple (Combined) | 65 | \$3,750 - \$7,150 |