



The Benefits Store
Save Money with Better Coverage



What Is the Affordable Care Act (ACA)?

Overview

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as healthcare reform, is a law passed in 2010 that changed how health insurance works in the United States. It is not health insurance itself, but a set of rules designed to expand access to coverage and protect consumers.

Why the ACA Matters

The ACA was created to make health coverage more accessible and affordable while improving protections for individuals and families. It also introduced standards that insurance companies must follow.

Key Consumer Protections

- Coverage cannot be denied due to pre-existing conditions
- Insurance companies cannot cancel your policy if you get sick
- Children can stay on a parent's plan until age 26
- Preventive services are covered at no cost
- No lifetime or annual limits on essential health benefits
- Insurance companies must spend most premium dollars on care, not overhead

Essential Health Benefits

Most ACA-compliant plans must cover a standard set of services, including:

- Doctor visits and hospital care
- Preventive and routine care
- Emergency services
- Prescription drugs
- Mental health and substance use treatment
- Pregnancy and newborn care
- Rehabilitation services
- Pediatric dental and vision care

How the ACA Expands Coverage

The ACA made coverage more widely available by:

- Expanding Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) eligibility
- Providing financial assistance (subsidies) for qualifying individuals
- Creating health insurance marketplaces like Covered California

Health Coverage Requirement

The ACA encourages individuals to have health insurance by making coverage more accessible and affordable. Even if you don't have employer-sponsored coverage, you can explore marketplace plans or government programs.

Common Questions

Q: Is the ACA the same as health insurance?

A: No. The ACA is a law that regulates how health insurance works and improves access to coverage.

Q: Can I be denied coverage because of a health condition?

A: No. Under the ACA, insurance companies cannot deny coverage due to pre-existing conditions.

Q: What are essential health benefits?

A: They are a set of required services that most plans must cover, including preventive care and emergency services.

Q: How can I get coverage under the ACA?

A: You can enroll through your state marketplace, such as Covered California, or qualify for programs like Medicaid.

Key Takeaway

The Affordable Care Act improved access to health insurance and added important consumer protections. Understanding how it works can help you make better decisions about your coverage.

<https://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/110-health/10-basics/aca.cfm>
<https://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/110-health/20-look/index.cfm>

