

## Health care use down in diabetes patients with high deductibles

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(HealthDay)—Overall, patients who switch to high-deductible health

plans (HDHPs) have a decrease in health care utilization, though high-severity emergency department visit expenditures and hospitalization days increase in members from low-income neighborhoods, according to a study published online Jan. 30 in *Diabetes Care*.

J. Frank Wharam, M.B.B.Ch., M.P.H., from Harvard University in Boston, and colleagues studied the effects of HDHPs on emergency department and hospital care, [adverse outcomes](#), and total health care expenditures among 23,493 HDHP members with diabetes (aged 12 to 64 years) insured through a large national [health](#) insurer (from 2003 to 2012). HDHP members were enrolled in a low-deductible plan for one year and then an HDHP for one year after an employer-mandated switch. Patients who transitioned to HDHPs were matched to 192,842 contemporaneous patients with low-deductible employer-based coverage.

The researchers found that after the HDHP transition, emergency department visits declined by 4 percent, hospitalizations by 5.6 percent, direct (nonemergency department-based) hospitalizations by 11.1 percent, and total [health care expenditures](#) by 3.8 percent. While overall there was no change in adverse outcomes in the HDHP cohort, members from low-income neighborhoods had 23.5 percent higher high-severity [emergency department](#) visit expenditures and 27.4 percent higher high-severity hospitalization days.

"HDHPs had a modest effect on high-acuity utilization and outcomes in the overall diabetes cohort, but the low-income subgroup experienced substantial and concerning increases in adverse outcomes," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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