As health care costs continue to rise, the *American Heart Association* is offering advice about how to trim those medical bills. The
Association
's Minnesota spokeswoman, Elizabeth Warmka, says it's a matter of staying healthy, and the prescription for that is to be active and watch what you eat.

"We have found that if you exercise on a daily basis and eat healthy food, your risk of getting heart disease and stroke is reduced by almost half. And for every one hour of exercise you do, you gain two hours of life."

She says walking is an easy, effective and cheap form of exercise. It increases bone density and improves circulation. Walking an extra 20 minutes a day burns seven pounds of body fat a year, she adds, and this is perfect weather to hit the sidewalks.

Healthy eating is another way to get a handle on medical bills, Warmka advises.

"If you eat in, and you prepare your meals at home, you're going to tend to eat less, and you're also going to spend less. It's an economical way to be fit. Get those fruits and vegetables in. Canned and frozen work just as well as fresh, and they're also more affordable."

She says restaurants can be a real treat, but should be the exception rather than the rule: Diners consume twice as many calories eating out than at the kitchen table.

The *Association* has tips on healthy eating on a budget and a fitness tracking tool online at www.MyStartOnline.org
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