

# Health Care News And Notes



## Are You Ready For The Real Cost Of Health Care?

(NAPSA)—Recent health care changes may offer more Americans access to major medical coverage, but consumers should be aware of the effect that out-of-pocket health care costs will continue to have on their bank accounts. Consumers may find themselves financially unprepared for an unexpected illness or injury if they do not understand all aspects of the cost of medical care.

The U.S. government predicts that household out-of-pocket health care expenses will reach an average of \$3,301 per year by 2014; yet, the 2013 Aflac WorkForces Report (AWR) finds that only 23 percent of workers are saving more money in anticipation of medical expense increases.

Due to rising health care costs, employers are likely to shift more of the share to their employees—which can mean higher copayments, deductibles and premiums—to try to limit company spending on health benefits.

“Major medical insurance was never designed to cover everything,” said Manisha Thakor, personal finance expert. “Benefits packages don’t cover copays, co-insurance or necessary medical supplies, among other things, and the true cost of accidents and illnesses can be staggering.”

There are also expenses that continue—like rent or a car payment—when people have an illness or injury that prevents them from working. This could mean costs higher than people anticipate.

Consumers can prepare themselves for the unexpected by following this simple, four-step plan:

**1. Take advantage of employer-sponsored wellness programs.** Not only will consumers feel better as a result of taking



**Expenses such as rent and food can increase the total cost of an illness or accident that prevents a person from working.**

proactive steps to improve health and wellness, but participating could lower insurance rates, depending on insurance plans.

**2. Go to preventative care checkups once or twice yearly.** Taking action to offset potential problems down the road helps minimize the chance of illness or poor health escalating into a costly condition.

**3. Increase your savings rate.** According to the AWR, most people aren’t saving enough. Nearly half (46 percent) of American workers have less than \$1,000 in savings, which may not cover costs associated with serious illnesses or accidents. Now more than ever, it’s important to prepare for out-of-pocket health care expenses.

**4. Talk to HR to understand medical insurance coverage.** Consumers can stay involved in benefits decisions by educating themselves on what’s available. They should turn to HR representatives for clarity if they are uncertain about insurance offerings and also consider voluntary insurance to fill gaps in coverage.

To see additional study results, or to learn more about the real cost of illness or injury, consumers can visit [www.AflacWorkForcesReport.com](http://www.AflacWorkForcesReport.com) and [www.GetTheRealCost.com](http://www.GetTheRealCost.com).