



# Health Bulletin



## Easy Ways To Cut Your Health Care Costs

(NAPSA)—With the costs of even the most basic daily necessities like gas and food skyrocketing, rising health care costs are yet another essential expense making Americans' lives more stressful. In this environment of increased financial pressures, it is more important than ever to take an active role in effectively managing health care expenses.

During benefit open enrollment season, which usually begins in late summer, many employed Americans have the opportunity to sign up for benefits that can slash their health care costs. Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs) are easy-to-use accounts that can help you save up to 40 percent on costs not covered by your core health plan. A family with \$5,000 in annual out-of-pocket costs could cut their costs by up to \$2,000 with an FSA or HSA.

Setting up an FSA is easy and simply requires you to have your employer make contributions to the account pretax. As you incur expenses not covered by your core plan, you submit proof of the expenses to your benefit administrator, who will then reimburse you for the expense. Some employers even offer debit cards along with the accounts, eliminating the paperwork altogether.

HSAs work generally the same way, but are accompanied by a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP), sometimes referred to as "catastrophic coverage" or "consumer driven" plan. The advantage of these plans is they also allow you to earn investment returns on your account balance.

Here are some easy ways to be sure you are doing all you can to manage your health care costs in the coming year:

### **Take an active role during this open enrollment season.**

Attend the benefits open enrollment meeting or seminar offered by your company. If your company does not offer one, ask a human resources employee whether an HSA or FSA is offered and obtain the paperwork needed to sign up. If your employers do not offer an FSA or HSA, make yourself heard and ask them to offer it next year.

### **Use available planning tools.**

There are several very simple planning tools available that can help you easily determine which account is right for you and how much to contribute. For example, at [www.wageworks.com](http://www.wageworks.com) you can get free access to eligibility calculators and tools that can help you determine how much to contribute to your account.

### **Monitor your spending.**

Keep a tally of all your health care

expenses. Double-check to be sure you are claiming every single expense that is eligible for the tax benefit. Even nontraditional expenses such as fertility treatments, orthodontics, psychology/therapy and acupuncture are covered. As the cost of living increases across the nation, be sure you are taking advantage of every opportunity to save.

### **What's Covered By FSAs & HSAs?**

(go to [www.wageworks.com](http://www.wageworks.com) for complete list)

- ✓ **Acupuncture**
- ✓ **Birth control** (over-the-counter or prescription)
- ✓ **Chiropractic care**
- ✓ **Contact lenses & solutions**
- ✓ **Co-payments and deductibles** (medical, dental or vision)
- ✓ **Dental** (exams, cleanings, fillings, crowns)
- ✓ **Fertility treatments & procedures**
- ✓ **Insulin & diabetic testing supplies**
- ✓ **Laser eye surgery**
- ✓ **Orthodontia** (adult and child)
- ✓ **Prescription eyeglasses & sunglasses**
- ✓ **Prescription drugs**
- ✓ **Over-the-counter** examples: acne treatments, allergy/sinus medicine, antacids, asthma medicines/treatments, bandages, condoms & spermicides, cold & flu prevention/medicine, cough drops, herbal medicines, etc.
- ✓ **And much more**

