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my health. my choice.
issue five

The first four newsletters in this series have given you the background on what one type of a Consumer-Driven Health Plan [High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) and Health Savings Account (HSA)] is and how it works. Now it is time to put it all together and see how being a savvy healthcare consumer works with this type of plan.

Consumer-Driven Health Plan Helps to Contain Costs

When you think of healthcare in the United States, *wellness* and *involvement* are usually not two of the terms that come to mind. However, with the high cost of healthcare, these are the two areas where *we* can make a difference in our personal lives and at the same time make progress in containing costs.



Wellness

When you live a healthy lifestyle and see your physician regularly for routine check-ups and screenings, you can not only expect to live longer, but feel better. Taking care of yourself and reducing your risk for disease also includes many lifestyle changes including diet, physical activity, smoking, and much more. These actions provide us with a better chance of avoiding serious (and expensive) illnesses.

Involvement

When you are involved in your healthcare decisions, you tend to be more aggressive in researching your medical options (quality ratings on hospitals and doctors) and more likely to understand what your costs will be for your medical treatment and required medications. You have the opportunity to become a healthcare consumer and understand how to receive quality care.

How do you benefit?

Tax-free money – By leading a healthy lifestyle, your healthcare expenses are generally lower. Lower expenses equate to fewer out-of-pocket costs deducted from your HSA. The funds remaining in your HSA at the end of the year continue to grow with tax-free interest or investment return and roll over to the following year.

Lower costs – Becoming a savvy healthcare consumer helps lower your out-of-pocket costs. This includes the lower per pay premium you pay for the HDHP coverage as well as the tax-savings you gain when you contribute to your HSA.

This model of a Consumer-Driven Health Plan, with its High Deductible Health Plan and Health Savings Account components, gives you the building blocks to contain costs. You decide on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle for you and your family, how to manage your healthcare expenses (when and where to seek medical care) and when or if to use your HSA funds to cover your out-of-pocket costs.

It's Now Up To You

Your annual open enrollment period is the time for you to decide if you are going to take control of your lifestyle and reign in the high cost of healthcare. Carefully review the information contained in your enrollment material, including medical plan summaries, HSA enrollment material, and per pay costs. Do your homework using the tools and the information you have been given to see if a Consumer-Driven Health Plan is in your future. It's now up to you.

In the end *Wellness* and *Involvement* can lead to lower healthcare costs and tax-free money that can pay for eligible expenses now and in future years.

