

## **PLAN FOR YOUR HEALTH/PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE HEALTH BENEFITS TIP SHEET**

### **BACKGROUND**

Almost 85 percent of Americans enjoy health benefits coverage offered through an employer, the government or a private policy (Table 1). Most plans offer an annual fall Open Enrollment period that typically lasts from October to December. This provides an opportunity for millions of people to evaluate and adjust their health benefits plans to ensure that they have adequate coverage for themselves and their family members.

Yet, according to a recent survey by Aetna and the Financial Planning Association® (FPA), more than one third of Americans will simply keep the same health benefits plan they had in 2007 for 2008; despite the fact that their health needs might change dramatically (Table 13).

Of those people who will consider their plan options this year, three out of five (61 percent) will spend less than an hour evaluating the options available to them (Table 7).

### **PlanforYourHealth.com Can Help**

Understanding health benefits information can be confusing. In fact, more than a third (35 percent) of insured adults surveyed said that health benefits information is difficult to read and understand (Table 19).

That's why Aetna and FPA developed [PlanforYourHealth.com](http://PlanforYourHealth.com). This one-stop resource for health benefits information includes expert advice and resources that can help all consumers make informed choices about their health benefits coverage based on their needs and available options.

When asked what would make selecting or reviewing health benefits easier, survey respondents said:

- An easy to use website (21 percent)
- A tool to help you decide the best plan based on your unique needs (21 percent)
- A guidebook that would walk you through the process of choosing and using a plan (20 percent)
- An expert to answer your questions (17 percent)
- An online calculator to help you compute total costs (12 percent)
- A glossary to help define complicated terms (10 percent)
- And more than a third (34 percent) wanted all of the above (Table 16)

PlanforYourHealth.com responds to these needs by providing a variety of tips, tools and resources to help simplify the complexities of health benefits and make Open Enrollment an easier process. The next six steps address consumers' needs and how this web resource can help.

## SIX TIPS FOR NAVIGATING OPEN ENROLLMENT

### 1. Get on the Web

PlanforYourHealth.com is an easy-to-use website that can help you find answers to many of your health benefits questions. Organized into five sections based on important stages in life, this resource helps you make decisions whether you're starting a new job, getting married, starting a family, living single or preparing for retirement. These changes can greatly impact your health benefits and financial needs and are critical moments for reevaluating your health plan.

PlanforYourHealth.com answers this need by providing comprehensive tips and articles on topics such as [personal health records](#), consumer-directed health plans and flexible spending accounts. Take some time to explore the site and you might find out ways to maximize your health plan or make decisions during Open Enrollment.

### 2. Prioritize

Most people consider three priorities when choosing health benefits:

- How much does my plan cost?
- What is the prescription drug benefit?
- Can I still use my preferred physicians and/or hospital?

While these are certainly important factors, the Health Benefits Priorities tool on [PlanforYourHealth.com](#) helps you evaluate your plan options based on your lifestyle and *how* you use your health plan. Simple questions help you review the benefits that are available to you and your family and prioritize which ones make the most sense for you.

### 3. Let a Trusted Resource Guide You

Understanding health benefits is not easy. That's why there are professionals and resources to help. A variety of free resources are available on PlanforYourHealth.com, including access to a free copy of [Navigating Your Health Benefits For Dummies](#). This handy 64-page guide helps demystify the health benefits process with plain-English explanations of options and suggestions on how to make the most of your health plan.

From choosing the right coverage, to making the most of plan extras, to filing claims, *Navigating Your Health Benefits For Dummies* takes readers through every step of the health benefits cycle.

### 4. Ask for Advice

A new feature on PlanforYourHealth.com will allow visitors to view answers to commonly asked Open Enrollment questions. Dr. Charles Cutler, national medical director at Aetna, and Tracey Baker, a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional,

will answer common health and financial questions. Website visitors will also get the opportunity to submit their own questions.

This feature, launching just in time for Open Enrollment, will supply answers to a broad range of topics including Medicare, financial planning and health plan options. Visit the site to see concerns that many consumers share related to health benefits and financial issues – you may find the answers you’ve been looking for.

## **5. Calculate your Needs**

Projecting your health expenses for the coming year is one of the smartest ways to ensure that you have the right coverage and benefits for yourself and your family. Still, only 39 percent of insured adults will take the time to try and calculate their expenses for the year ahead (Table 22).

Many more (67 percent) will use their 2007 health costs as a barometer for 2008, despite the fact that their health needs can change dramatically from year to year (Table 25).

The Health Expense Calculator on [PlanforYourHealth.com](http://PlanforYourHealth.com) helps you estimate your future health care costs. By answering six simple questions, you can approximate annual medical, dental and prescription expenses based on the age, medical conditions and frequency of physician visits for anyone in your family. These costs are key to determining your priorities in health benefits planning.

## **6. Brush Up on the Basics**

It’s easy to be confused by health plan terms – co-insurance, deductibles, formulary, EAPs, FSAs, HSAs – what do they all mean? PlanforYourHealth.com offers a convenient, easy-to-understand [glossary](#) with basic definitions to help you understand the complicated language.

No matter how much (or how little) time you have to spare, PlanforYourHealth.com can help you maximize your health benefits.