



## **Health and Benefits Fast Facts**

### **Health Literacy:**

Health plan information is crucial to help people understand and manage their health and financial planning. However, according to the Institute of Medicine, many American adults have difficulty understanding and acting on health information.

- Ninety million Americans have difficulty understanding and acting on health information, and 40-44 million of those have difficulty finding information in unfamiliar or complex texts such as newspaper articles, editorials, medicine labels, forms or charts.
- More than 300 studies indicate that health-related materials far exceed the average reading ability of U.S. adults. Even people with strong reading skills can have difficulty understanding complicated, complex information.

### **Health Benefits:**

Most Americans are eligible for benefits if their employer offers health insurance, and participate in the plans they are offered.

- In firms that offer health benefits, 81 percent of workers were eligible for the benefits in 2003, and 83 percent of these workers participated in the available plans.

### **Cost of Health Care:**

Health care constitutes a major expense, especially for women, but it is often overlooked as part of their financial plan. Women should calculate how much they are spending on their health care and consider this information in their financial portfolios.

- Over a lifetime, each American spends \$316,600 on health care. However, it is a third higher for females (\$361,200) than males (\$268,700).
- Americans spent about \$212.5 billion, or roughly \$725 per person, in out-of-pocket expenses in 2002.
- Total health care spending reached \$1.55 trillion in 2002. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, health care spending now averages \$5,440 per person each year.
- Women drive 75 percent of health care decisions and control 66 percent of the health care spending in the U.S. They also spend 68 percent more on health care than men.

- In 2004, the average premium cost \$9,950 for families and \$3,383 for individuals.

### **Life Stages:**

As consumerism begins to have an impact on health care, and consumer-directed plans appear to gain momentum, people need to understand what health plans cover, what their options are when selecting benefits and how to make decisions about benefits at various life stages, such as getting married, starting a family, and throughout their career such as changing jobs or retiring.

#### Marriage:

- 2.4 million couples get married each year.

#### Family:

- 4.1 million women will have a child this year.

#### Career:

##### Changing Jobs –

- The average person will have 3.5 different careers in his or her lifetime and work for 10 employers, keeping each job for 3.5 years.

The average American beginning his or her career in the 1990s will probably work in 10 or more jobs for five or more employers before retiring.

##### Retiring –

- More than 22 million people will be retiring by 2008 and need to think about their long-term health plan options.
- While most couples say they would like to retire at the same time, in 2000 there were more than two million couples in the United States in which a man 55 or over had not worked in the previous year but his wife had – accounting for 10.9 percent of couples involving a man 55 or over.