

# HSA Healthline

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## CEO Corner By Lynn Paulson, CEO

Adequate and affordable health insurance coverage is a high priority for most Americans. The increasing and seemingly out of control cost of traditional health care plans are outpacing other cost of living indicators.

It's not just an opinion - it's a fact. Health care costs are increasing at a rate of two to three times the average wage growth. Currently, the U.S. spends about 16 percent (and increasing) of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on health care. That's more than twice as much as any other industrialized country in the world. Without controlling these costs, it has the potential to ruin or implode this country.

We really have no 'system' for health care - but rather a health care sector. Between 75 and 85 percent of medical records are still generated by paper. That's unbelievable given the improved productivity technology provides.

It's estimated there are more than 200 health care providers in the U.S. None of them interface or talk to each other. That's like having 200 different railroads

that all operate on different widths of tracks. It's simply unacceptable. We need to be able to connect the providers, and technology can help.

Controlling health care costs is what HSAs and consumer driven health care is all about. If we wait for the health care industry to fix the problem, we'll be waiting for a long time. It's like they have a credit card with no limit. If they need more 'limit,' they simply increase our health care insurance premiums.

We also need to make sure health care providers are giving their insured's the correct information based on facts, not on their commissions. High deductible policies by nature have a lower monthly premium than low deductible policies. Coupled with an HSA, that may be good for the consumer, but a lot of insurance agents are compensated based on gross premium dollars. That may not be good for the insurance consumer. Ask the hard questions. Be informed. In the end, it's your money.

## HSA News By Jennifer Roy, HSA Advisor

Have you ever wondered why your yearly salary increases have been continually getting smaller? What is happening to the money companies were once putting aside for wage increases? Furthermore, what is happening to the health benefits from your employer, that used to look so attractive?

Health insurance premiums have drastically risen in the last few years, while wage increases have only raised slightly.

Just by looking at the above statement you can see this has become a major concern for employers and their employees. When employers are spending more for health benefits, there is minimum room for wage increases.

The Kaiser Family Foundation performed a study and found that employers on average cover 84 percent of the cost of health insurance for individuals and 73 percent for families. Unfortunately, due to the rising cost of health insurance, employers are finding it

increasingly difficult to provide benefits to their workers. Since 2000, the number of employers offering health benefits has dropped eight percent.

According to *U. S. News & World Report*, the overall total cost of health insurance for individuals now averages \$4,242 a year. For families, it is an astonishing \$11,480. Most workers pay a portion of their premium: on average, \$627 for single coverage and \$2,973 for family coverage.

To help control this on-going battle of rising health insurance cost, the Bush Administration is aggressively promoting high-deductible insurance plans coupled with health savings accounts. Together they require consumers to take on more responsibility regarding the initial cost of their health care.

## Is it Time for a Change? By Lori Doele, Business Development Officer

Everyone needs physical activity for the best health, but with the convenience of modern living most of us do non-active work. While people are seemingly more health conscious and are becoming more and more concerned with health and well-being, an astounding 95 percent of Americans still believe that they do not have enough 'energy.' The good news is that you don't have to spend a lot of time, or exercise intensely to reap the benefits of physical activity to improve your well-being.

### Exercise Basics

The more you exercise, the better, but even a small amount can have health benefits. Most people should aim for 30 to 60 minutes of moderate effort activities most days of the week.

Choose an activity with an intensity and frequency that you are comfortable with. For example, if you haven't exercised in

awhile, you might want to start with walking, then gradually increase the speed you walk, the distance you walk, or start to include hills on your walk. You owe it to yourself, your family and your loved ones.

### The Three Areas of Physical Activity

Your fitness plan should include a balance of activities including endurance, flexibility and strength:

*Endurance activities* will help your heart and lungs and your overall sense of well being.

*Flexibility activities* keep your joints and muscles healthy and mobile and also help prevent sports injuries.

*Strength activities* help your bones and muscles stay strong.

### Exercise Safety

**Start gradually.** If you are not used to physical activity, start at an easy pace for

no more than 10 to 20 minutes for the first week or two and build up to your goal by increasing time or intensity by 10 percent each week.

**Don't over-exert.** Beginners should keep their heart rates below 70 percent of their maximum heart rate. Advanced exercisers should stay below 90 percent. To determine your maximum heart rate, simply subtract your age from 220.

**Warm up.** Begin all activity with a warm-up (activity at half your normal intensity) for five minutes and then gently stretch the muscle group you are using.

**Drink up.** Make sure you drink enough fluids and don't wait until you're thirsty. Drink at least two glasses of water before activity, then more during and after activity.

**Don't over-heat.** Limit your activity if it is very hot and humid.

**Cool down.** End with a five minute cool down session (such as slow walking).

