

KNOW YOUR EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Benefit and insurance issues important to you - brought to you by the insurance specialists at: Davevic Benefit Consultants.



Flexible Spending Accounts

A new approach to use it or lose it

A flexible spending account (FSA) is a beneficial tool for saving money on health care, since the account contains pretax dollars contributed each pay period to pay for qualified medical and dental expenses. However, one provision of an FSA is that money contributed within a calendar year must be spent within the same year or it is forfeited.

December Scramble

A common December scenario is that many people rush to use up leftover funds in their FSAs while they still can.

However, thanks to a rule change by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) a few years ago, employers have the option to offer up to 14 and ½ months to use the funds. Many employers are taking advantage of this extension to the use-it-or-lose-it provision, allowing employees to spend money from their FSA until March 15.

The rule change does not mandate an extension past Dec. 31; it merely gives employers the option. Be sure to check with your employer to see what the rules are.

What to Buy at Crunch Time?

When trying to use up FSA funds at the end of the year, many people used to stock up on over-the-counter (OTC) drugs with their excess money.

However, due to changes made by the health care reform legislation, OTC drugs purchased without a prescription are no longer a qualified medical expense for reimbursement from an FSA (except insulin). Thus, you can make sure to fill any prescriptions you

as healthy as possible. Another smart option may be a replacement or spare set of eye glasses or contact lenses (or an eye exam if you haven't had one in quite some time).

Be sure to ask an HR representative for a full list of eligible expenses.

How to Plan Ahead

Because an FSA is such a beneficial money-saving tool, it is natural to want to make the most of the tax advantage. However, putting too much money in the fund may not benefit you if you have to spend it on unnecessary expenses or fail to spend the money at all. The trick is to allocate an appropriate amount to your FSA in the first place.

Look at your expenses the last few years and determine what your average out-of-pocket medical expenses have been. Also consider if the following year will bring any big life changes such as a marriage, divorce, new baby or changed dependent status.

To calculate your potential savings when using an FSA, visit www.asiflex.com/Calculator/Tax-Savings-Calculator.htm.

“ An FSA is a beneficial money-saving tool, but determining how much money to put aside is an important factor. ”

have before the year ends, but will need to find other uses for the remaining FSA dollars.

Concentrate on using those funds for medical expenses that you have been putting off. If you haven't been to the dentist all year, schedule a teeth cleaning. If there is a screening or procedure you've been putting off, use FSA funds for that. You should focus on using that money to keep yourself

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