

Talking Cents

Improving your financial health



Emergency Savings

Unfortunately, it is almost a given that at some point we will face an unexpected expense that is larger than what we would've liked.

An emergency fund is a foundational step that can prevent you from having to turn to debt or retirement assets when times get tough. It turns a potential financial catastrophe into a mere inconvenience. We're providing answers to some common questions to help you ensure you're prepared:

What types of expenses are considered an emergency? Emergencies are unforeseen issues that impact your finances and cannot be avoided or delayed. Examples include:

- A repair to your home or vehicle that is necessary for appropriate function and safety
- A repair or replacement of a home appliance or system (i.e. air conditioning/oven/furnace)
- An out-of-pocket medical expense for an illness, injury, or other unforeseen necessary care
- An unexpected reduction or loss of income

Anything foreseeable or discretionary is generally not an emergency; examples of non-emergencies include vacations, home remodels for cosmetic reasons, or holiday expenditures. Once you see your savings begin to build, you may be tempted to use the account for something other than an emergency. Budget separately for bigger expenses that are discretionary or foreseeable and keep your emergency money for unforeseen situations.

Where do I put it? An emergency fund should be easily accessible for when you need it, which is why many people choose traditional bank savings accounts. Relying on your retirement plan for hardships or loans is not an appropriate emergency strategy due to the fees, penalties, and lost market potential that may occur when removing money from a retirement plan prematurely.

A close-up photograph of a hand dropping a coin into a glass jar. The coin is in mid-air, just above the jar's opening. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a person in a blue uniform. The overall tone is professional and focused on financial matters.

ABCs of HSAs

Making the most of your Health Savings Account

HSA 101

You've chosen to start reading this likely because you've heard Health Savings Account (HSA)s are great, but you're not totally sure why. We've got you covered.

The Basics of a High Deductible Health Plan

High deductible health plans (HDHP) are unique in that you must reach your deductible before insurance will cover any of your medical expenses. However, preventive care is almost always covered in full by insurance, so you probably won't have to reach your deductible before visits such as your annual physical. It's important to remember that an HDHP is still a PPO plan, so the network of doctors and hospitals will generally be the largest insurance network available*.

How the HDHP works with a Health Savings Account (HSA)

You are only eligible to have an HSA if you are enrolled in an HDHP. An HSA is an account that can be funded with your tax-exempt dollars, by you, your employer or by both to help you pay for qualified medical expenses. When a claim is submitted to your HDHP for payment, you can use your HSA dollars to pay for out-of-pocket expenses.

2025 HSA Contribution Limits

You and your employer can both contribute to your HSA each year that you are eligible. Every year, the IRS sets limits on the maximum amount of pre-tax dollars you can contribute to your HSA account. Here are those amounts for 2025:

- Family: \$8,550
- Single: \$4,300

Contribution Eligibility

You can begin contributing to your HSA on the effective date of your High Deductible Health Plan coverage. You can then contribute up to the yearly limit (listed above for 2025) if you remain covered by the HDHP for at least a 12-month period.

Here's what you need to be eligible to open an HSA:

- Covered by an HDHP, and no other plan that isn't an HDHP
- Not eligible for Medicare benefits
- Not eligible to be claimed on another's tax return

*Check your plan details as this may not apply

Consumer Maneuvers

Health benefits education to save you money



Preventive Care Helps you Save

Seven out of 10 U.S. deaths are caused by chronic disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Preventive care is a type of health care that aims to maintain good overall health and by doing so, you can save a significant amount of money.

Preventive care helps you save money in two ways.

1. It will lower the long-term cost, because it will catch diseases in early stages when they are still readily treatable.
 - For example, if bloodwork shows you are pre-diabetic, you can start lifestyle changes to reverse it before becoming full-blown diabetes requiring costly treatment.
2. Most preventive services are covered in full by insurance which means you won't have to pay any out-of-pocket expenses.
 - Your yearly physical exam, screenings, lab tests and immunizations are generally covered in full by insurance. These screenings help catch and diagnose health issues early when they're more treatable and less expensive.

Schedule your yearly, preventive exam(s) soon if you haven't already. If you don't have a primary care physician, you can find one in-network by visiting your carrier's website and clicking on "Provider Finder" or "Find a Doctor."

Highway to Health

How to live healthier every day



Mindful Eating

Before you rummage through your pantry for a snack, you should stop and think. Being mindful of what goes into your body can help shape both your physical and mental state.

Healthy eating helps keep your blood sugar stable, which can help maintain your mood throughout the day. Unhealthy eating can feel good in the short-term, but it will leave you feeling less than satisfied later and can contribute to feelings of sleepiness, anxiety and more.

If you're looking to begin eating healthier, shift your mindset. Adopting Mindful Eating will help you become fully attentive to your food and how you buy, prepare, serve and consume it.

Here's how you can begin Mindful Eating:

Identify why you are eating and try to avoid it if you're simply eating because you're:

- Bored
- Stressed
- Sad

Be attentive to your food

- Avoid distractions and multi-tasking while consuming meals
- Pay attention to the tastes, textures and smells of your food
- Take small bites and chew slowly
- Think proactively about your meals
- Enjoy well thought out meals at consistent times

If you begin identifying why you're eating and paying attention to how the food makes you feel, you should start having the ability to make better choices and you'll likely enjoy your meals more too!

Moment of Zen

Improving your mental health



Unplug to Recharge: Your Guide to a Digital Detox

Do you catch yourself endlessly scrolling on your smartphone, watching the hours disappear? You're not the only one.

Experts have discovered that excessive smartphone use can alter your brain. Each swipe or scroll triggers a dopamine release, activating the same brain regions that respond to addictive substances like cocaine.

Excessive smartphone usage can cause:

- Self-image problems
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Weight gain
- Lack of time management
- Sleep problems
- If you feel that technology use is impacting your physical or mental well-being, or it's taking time away from important tasks, it might be time to consider a digital detox. You don't have to give up your devices entirely—just find a balance that works best for your lifestyle.

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How to get started:

Schedule a break from your phone. If you find yourself obsessively checking your phone and suspect addictive behavior, a simple way to start a detox is by setting specific intervals to check it. For instance, challenge yourself to only check your phone every 15 or 30 minutes. This can help you regain control over your screen time.

Disconnect at night before bedtime. Since excessive phone use can interfere with your sleep, try disconnecting or turning off your phone before bed. Setting a specific time to unplug each night can help improve your sleep quality and overall well-being.

Turn off notifications. If you feel compelled to respond to every text, email, or social media notification, consider turning off notifications in your phone settings. This simple step can help reduce distractions and give you more control over your time.

Use apps to track your usage. If your phone doesn't track your usage, there are apps that can help. These apps can monitor how much time you spend on your phone, block access to social media for specific periods, and provide detailed reports to help you identify areas where you're overusing your device.

Observe your emotions when using your phone. Be mindful of your phone habits to gain a deeper understanding of your relationship with your device. Are you using it out of boredom? For work? Does it leave you feeling better or worse? Reflecting on these emotions can help you identify patterns and take steps to manage your phone usage more effectively.