



THE 2026

# EASY GUIDE

To Understanding Your  
High Deductible Health Plan



# The plan that gives you more ...

The Anthem HDHP with H.S.A plan is a high deductible health plan that gives you:

- **More money** in your paycheck from lower monthly premiums
- **More ways to reduce taxes** with a tax-free health savings account (HSA)
- **More flexibility** in how you choose and pay for healthcare services
- **More opportunities** to build long-term healthcare and retirement savings



Watch the video

# HDHP at a glance

- Lower biweekly premiums than our other medical plans
- Higher deductible
- Free in-network preventive care
- Comprehensive medical and prescription drug coverage
- Use taxfree health savings account (HSA) to offset deductible

When you enroll in the HDHP, you get a health savings account (HSA) that is funded with contributions from County of Merced.<sup>1</sup> Employees also have the option of contributing to their HSA .

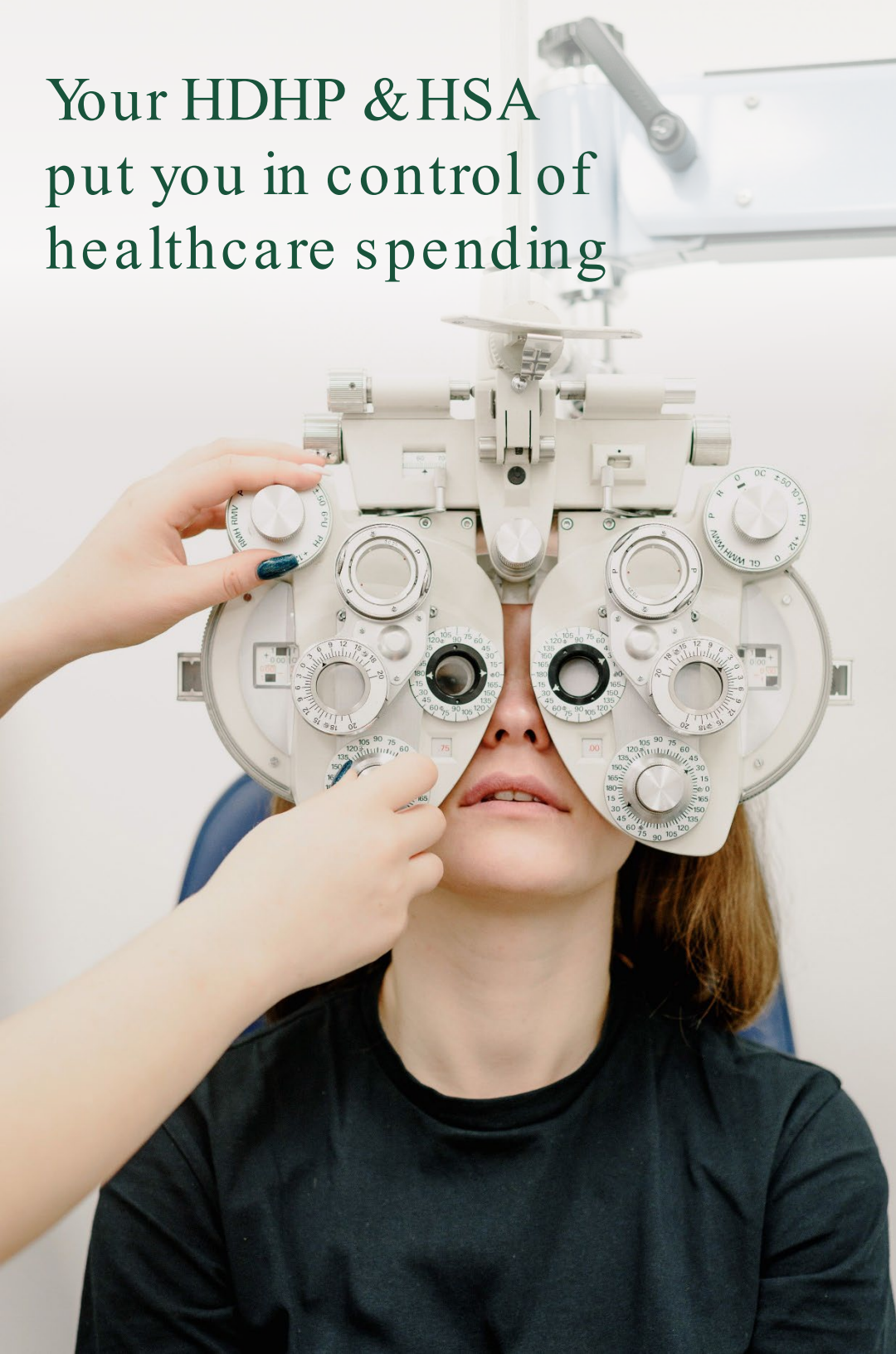
This is important because with the HDHP you pay for 100% of all medical costs (except preventive care) until you reach the annual deductible.

You can use the money in your HSA for your deductible and any other eligible medical expenses you have throughout the year or any time in the future.


Your HSA balance never expires—there’s no “use it or lose it” rule. You keep the account even if you leave the County, and any balance earns interest.

1. HSA contributions are before-tax for federal income taxes and before-tax for state taxes in all states except in California and New Jersey. Employer contributions made to your HSA are required to be treated as taxable income in California and therefore will be reported as imputed income for state tax purposes. The Employee’s HSA deduction is taken after-tax. Employees who contribute to the HSA with after-tax dollars, may deduct the contribution amount, subject to the maximum annual contribution limits, from their taxes at filing time. Employees should consult their tax advisor if they have questions.

# Your HDHP & HSA put you in control of healthcare spending



- Preventive care is a no-brainer. Keep up with your annual checkups without worrying about the cost, since preventive care is fully covered in-network.
- Use your HSA for many different health expenses: regular office visits, prescriptions, lab tests, acupuncture, chiropractic adjustments, even dental care, glasses and contacts.
- You don't have to spend your HSA. If you'd rather save your HSA for a potential large expense down the road, feel free to pay small medical costs from your bank account. If you change your mind, you can always get reimbursed from your HSA later.
- Your HSA gives you flexibility to visit any doctor, hospital or lab of your choice, even out-of-network providers.
- You can shop around. Healthcare is like any other purchase. If you have the time, it pays to shop around for the best quality and price.



Your HSA helps  
you save on  
federal taxes

NO TAX  
on HSA  
contributions

NO TAX  
on eligible HSA  
withdrawals

NO TAX  
on HSA interest  
and earnings

[Click here for more about federal and state tax savings.](#)

# Your HSA boosts your retirement savings plan

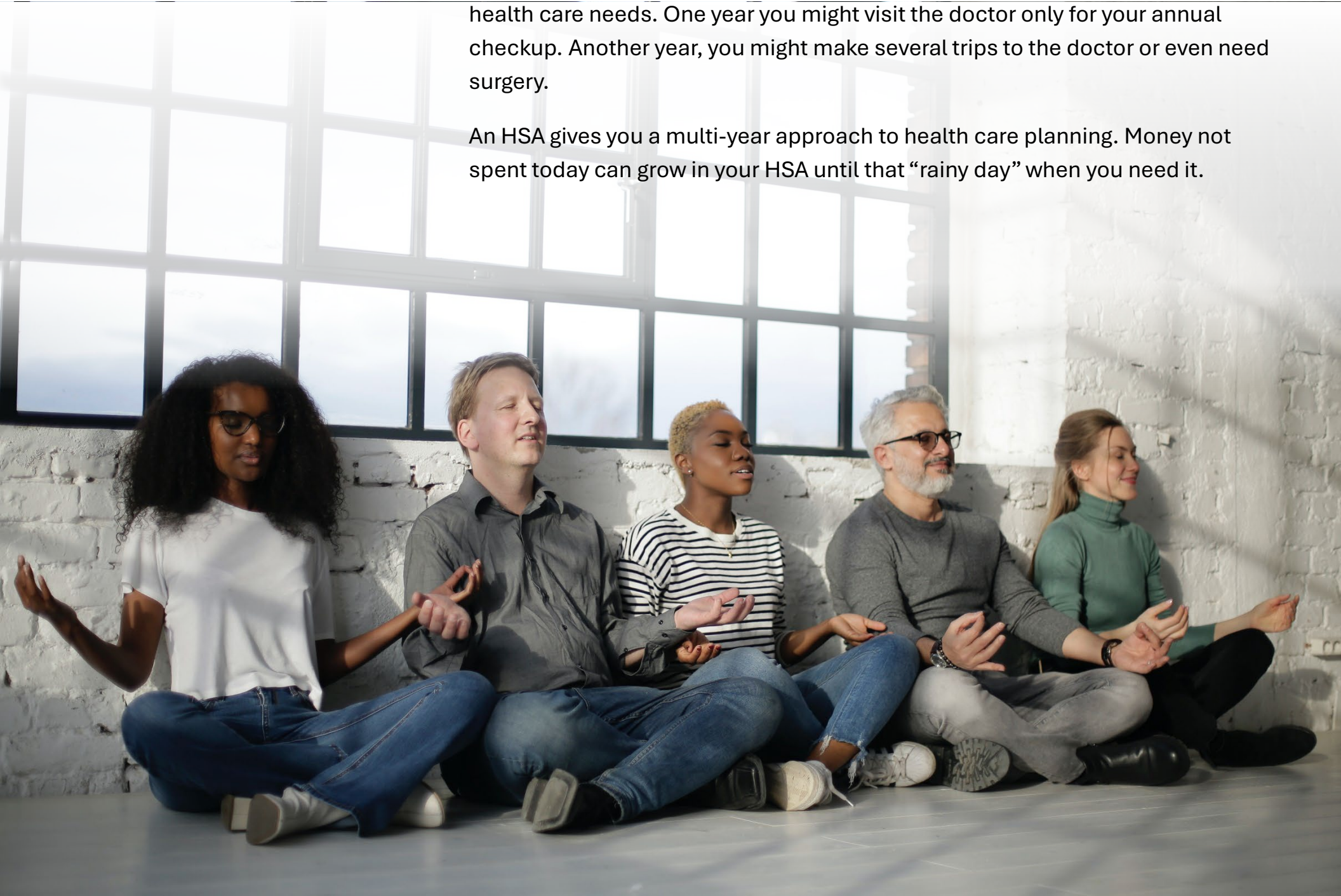


- Your HSA is your long-term health fund. The balance rolls over year after year so you can use it for healthcare expenses 30 days or 30 years from now.
- Your HSA is a smart addition to your retirement savings plan. Your post-retirement healthcare spending will be tax-free when you use your HSA. And after age 65, you can use HSA dollars for non-health expenses too (subject to ordinary income tax).
- You can invest your account balance. After you reach a minimum balance, you can invest your funds, just like a 401(k) or IRA. You have a number of investment options to choose from.

## Your annual healthcare needs are unique—just like you

The HSA takes into consideration the fluctuations most people have in their health care needs. One year you might visit the doctor only for your annual checkup. Another year, you might make several trips to the doctor or even need surgery.

An HSA gives you a multi-year approach to health care planning. Money not spent today can grow in your HSA until that “rainy day” when you need it.



# How much can you contribute to an HSA?

2026

## Allowable HSA contributions (per year)

	Employee Coverage	Family Coverage
Company Contribution	\$1,700	\$2,600
+		
Your Pre-Tax Contributions	\$2,700	\$6,150
=		
IRS Annual Maximum	\$4,400	\$8,750

In addition to the company contribution, you can contribute money to your HSA, up to the total annual amount allowed by the IRS. If you're 55 or older, you can contribute \$1,000 more each year.

# Plan Highlights


## HIGH DEDUCTIBLE HEALTH PLAN

Preventive Care	PLAN PAYS 100% (In-network)	
Before Meeting Deductible	YOU PAY 100% (\$1,700 Employee Only / \$3,900 Family) <i>When more than a single person is enrolled, the per person deductible does not apply and the family deductible must be met by any one person or collection of persons, but each is capped at his or her per person out-of-pocket maximum for covered services applied to the family deductible.</i>	
After Meeting Deductible	YOU PAY 10%	PLAN PAYS 90%
After Meeting Out-of-Pocket Max	PLAN PAYS 100% (After \$4,000 Employee Only / \$8,000 Family) <i>OOP Max for any one individual enrolled in family coverage is \$4,000</i> <i>Your copays, coinsurance, and deductible count toward your out of pocket amount(s).</i>	

Refer to your enrollment materials for additional plan details



Can we talk about the ELEPHANT in the room?

A 3D rendered scene of a modern living room. In the center, a large, realistic elephant stands behind a bright red leather sofa. The room features a light gray wall with two red-framed picture frames, two red floor lamps with cylindrical shades, and a reflective white floor. The lighting is soft and even.

What about  
that  
DEDUCTIBLE?

# It all comes back to the HSA

At first, many people have deductible “sticker shock,” but many features of the HDHP partially or completely offset your deductible and other healthcare costs:

- You pay less in premiums, allowing you to use the money you save for other things, including funding your HSA.
- County of Merced helps you cover your deductible with contributions to your HSA.
- The IRS sets a generous annual limit on how much you can contribute to your HSA.
- You get significant tax benefits. HSA contributions, withdrawals and earnings are free from federal tax. (A few states tax HSA contributions or earnings.)
- Your HSA balance rolls over every year. What you don’t spend continues to grow, with interest.



Can you give me some examples?



## Candace: Healthy Single Woman

Candace's costs were very low throughout the year. She had her annual checkup (fully covered), and she got an ankle brace after a minor sprain. She did not meet her deductible.

	<b>\$1,700</b>	HSA deposit from County of Merced
+	\$2,000	Candace's HSA contributions
=	<b>\$3,700</b>	Total HSA Deposits
-	\$500	Urgent care and ankle brace
=	<b>\$3,200</b>	HSA balance rolls over to next year

## Seth: Family Man

Seth covers his whole family. They visited the doctor often because life happens! Even though his family's expenses were higher, he did not meet his deductible.

	<b>\$2,600</b>	HSA deposit from County of Merced
+	\$5,500	Seth's HSA contributions
=	<b>\$8,100</b>	Total HSA Deposits
-	\$2,400	Sniffles, sneezes & fevers
=	<b>\$5,700</b>	HSA balance rolls over to next year



## Andre: A Little Too Sick at the Skate Park

Andre usually nails a kick flip, but this weekend he wiped out hard. His knee surgery exceeded his deductible. Here's how his health plan benefits (employee-only coverage) and HSA worked together to cover his costs.

### HDHP Plan Benefits

	<b>\$1,700</b>	Andre's in-network deductible
+	\$500	Andre's additional coinsurance costs
=	<b>\$2,200</b>	Andre's total out-of-pocket
+	\$4,100	Covered by insurance
=	<b>\$6,300</b>	Total knee surgery cost

### HSA Usage

	<b>\$1,700</b>	HSA deposit from County of Merced
+	\$2,000	Andre's HSA contributions
=	<b>\$3,700</b>	Total HSA Deposits
-	\$2,200	Paid for medical costs
=	<b>\$1,500</b>	HSA balance

What ELSE do I  
need to KNOW?



# Common Eligible Expenses

- Acupuncture
- Alcoholism treatment
- Ambulance
- Artificial limb
- Birth control pills
- Blood pressure monitoring device
- Breast pumps and related

- supplies
- Chiropractic care
- Dental treatment
- Dentures
- Diagnostic services
- Drug addiction treatment
- Eye examination, eye glasses, reading glasses, contacts
- Family planning items
- Fertility treatment
- Hearing aids
- Hospital services
- Immunization

- Insulin and diabetic supplies
- Laboratory fees
- Laser eye surgery
- Medical testing devices
- Menstrual care products
- Nursing services
- Obstetrical expenses
- Orthodontia (not cosmetic)
- Oxygen
- Physical therapy
- Prescription drugs
- Psychiatric care
- Smoking cessation program

- and medications
- Surgery
- Telehealth services
- Transportation for medical care
- Wheelchair, walkers, crutches and canes

*Many over-the-counter products are HSA-eligible, including things like allergy medicines and feminine hygiene products. Look for a more comprehensive list on the HSA administrator website.*

How can I spend my HSA?

Eligible Expenses

Ineligible Expenses



# HSA Eligibility Rules

## For You

To be eligible to make deposits to an HSA:

- You must currently be enrolled in an HDHP.
- You may not be enrolled in any other non-HDHP health coverage, except for accident, disability, dental or vision, or long term care coverage.
- You may not have a general purpose flexible spending account (FSA) or be eligible to use one (such as a spouse's FSA). Limited purpose FSAs, which cover dental and vision expenses only, are allowed.
- You cannot be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return.
- You may not be enrolled in Medicare, Medicaid or Tricare.

## For Your Adult Dependents

- Your HSA may be used to pay for eligible expenses for you and for your legal tax dependents (people listed on your federal income tax return).
- While you can cover dependent children on your health plan up to age 26, this does not extend to HSA spending. When your adult child is no longer a tax dependent, any HSA distributions for the child would be subject to taxes and penalties.
- If you cover your Domestic Partner on the HDHP, you may each set up an HSA and contribute the full family amount (assuming you are HSA-eligible). However, you may not use your HSA for your partner's expenses (and vice versa).

### Nonqualified Medical Expenses

If you use your HSA for a nonqualified medical expense, you may owe taxes plus a 20% tax penalty on that amount. If you are age 65 or older or disabled at the time, you just pay your regular tax rate but no penalty on nonqualified withdrawal amounts.

### Keeping Records

Keep all your receipts for your HSA transactions for at least three years. This proves that you used your funds for qualified medical expenses and provides documentation in case you are audited by the IRS.

### State Taxes

Most states treat HSA contributions and earnings on a tax-favored basis, just like federal. California and New Jersey do not exclude HSA contributions from income. Contact your tax adviser or HSA administrator for additional information on taxes in your state.

### Excess Contributions

If you contribute over the IRS limit in one year, you will have to pay tax plus 6% on the excess. To avoid additional taxes, you can withdraw the excess amount before the April 15 tax filing deadline or direct the excess toward the next year's contributions.

### HSA Beneficiaries

If you name your spouse as your HSA beneficiary, your spouse will inherit your account and it will become your spouse's HSA. If your beneficiary is not your spouse, the account will no longer be considered an HSA and becomes taxable to the beneficiary.

Consult a tax adviser for guidance on how these rules may affect you.



[MORE  
INFO](#)

# Helpful Online Resources

Click below for additional online resources.



High Deductible Health Plan



HSA



The EASYGuide to  
Understanding Your High  
Deductible Health Plan

