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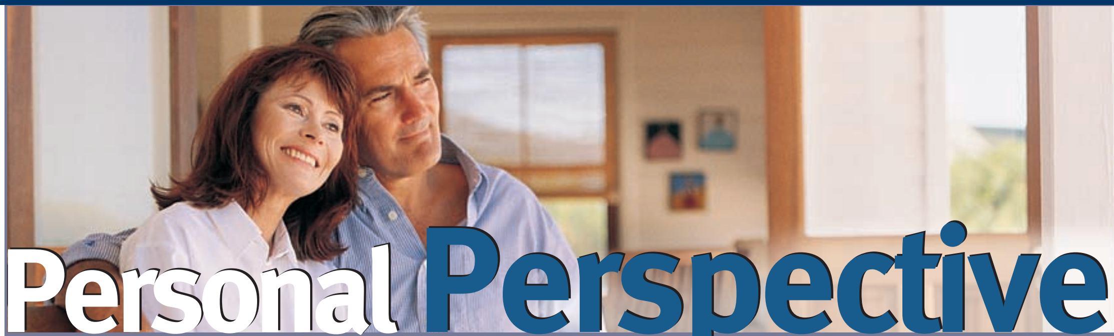

Personal Perspective

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Young and Healthy

While there are many excellent reasons why now is the best time to consider beginning or adding to your life insurance protection, one of the key factors determining availability, pricing and access to the best plans is three simple words: your current health. And even better news: Once you have begun a particular life insurance plan, during that policy's term, no future changes in your health will have any effect on your protection. There may even come a time when illness, accident, or development of a major health problem would make the purchase of needed life insurance difficult or prohibitively expensive. Yet the coverage you purchased while in good health will continue to provide protection exactly as originally promised.

If your policy is "permanent" (also known as whole life), cash values will continue to accrue and, if applicable, pay dividends. Many policies also offer the option to "lock in" a guarantee that future purchases of additional protection will be available based upon your health today.

It's ironic that those in the best position to qualify for the best and least expensive life insurance—the young and healthy—often think they have plenty of time to obtain coverage. If you are currently in an excellent state of health, there is no better time than now to talk with one of our professionals about life insurance. If you delay, unexpected changes in your health could make a later conversation far more difficult.

Tax Benefits of Life Insurance

Life insurance should always be purchased to serve its primary purpose: providing protection and funds for those left behind upon the death of the insured.

But as long as you are accomplishing the key benefit, there is no reason to ignore some other advantages that can add even more value to your life insurance purchase. For example, under current tax laws, did you know:

- A life policy's death benefit, no matter how large, transfers to beneficiaries free of income tax?
- Earnings that grow within a life insurance policy are tax-deferred?
- Earnings within life insurance policies are not currently counted as income when determining how much of your Social Security benefits are taxable?

These are just three examples of many ways in which life insurance as a part of your overall personal protection plans goes far beyond just the death benefit.

Health Problems? You May Still Be Eligible

Just a few years ago, individuals diagnosed with a major health condition, such as cancer, diabetes or heart disease, might have found themselves unable to purchase life insurance under nearly any circumstance, or at least they would have been severely limited in what protection could be obtained and at what price.

But today, thanks to advances in medical treatments, diagnosis, technology and underwriting expertise, many of these same people are finding new options available.

The cost of coverage is typically higher, and underwriting rules will usually lead to some stipulations on the breadth of protection, but many formerly uninsurable persons will now discover a wide variety of products available that provide valuable protection for their beneficiaries. And if medical certification can be obtained that the specific health issue is stabilized or even improving with treatment and changes in lifestyle, some insurance providers will even consider lowering premiums or coverage limitations.

For more information about obtaining needed life insurance protection, even for those with major health issues, contact our service team today.

A Great Plan Always Has a Backup

Most financial plans are based on projected income flow. They allocate part of current income to savings or investments that will provide cash flow later in life when a work paycheck no longer exists. But what happens if your income is suddenly curtailed by a devastating injury or illness?

Workers compensation applies only if your disability is employment-related, and Social Security disability benefits are difficult to qualify for. The Social Security Administration website specifies a five-step process under "How We Make the Decision" on eligibility for disability benefits that shows how qualifying for disability benefits can be very difficult and time consuming. At multiple points in the process, you must show that you cannot work at all. That's a pretty high bar to hurdle.

An alternative to relying on Social Security or workers compensation is individual disability insurance. It is structured to pay a certain portion of your monthly income after a short (or long if you choose that option) waiting period. Eligibility for benefits is pre-established under contract, and the process of filing for benefits is not nearly as cumbersome or time consuming as the Social Security process.

Individual disability insurance will keep income flowing for regular bills and can be written to also provide extra income to feed retirement accounts. It is an essential backup plan for anyone who wants a comprehensive financial plan.

Include Social Security in Your Planning

If you are approaching retirement or even just setting out on saving for that time of life, you should try to generate an accurate estimate of what you can expect to receive in retirement benefits, based upon your earnings history and benefits you are scheduled to receive.

Those benefits include your private savings plan, your employer-based savings plan or pension, and your Social Security check.

Instead of relying on the latest financial articles or political debates, why not get the straight information specific to your Social Security benefits directly from the Social Security Administration? Go to www.ssa.gov/estimator/ and enter the requested identifying information. You will receive an immediate estimate of your personal expected Social Security benefits based upon your actual government records of earnings reported over your years of employment. To use the estimator, you must be currently qualified for, but not receiving, Social Security benefits.

Once you obtain your estimate, you can talk to your employer's benefits team about your expected payments from that system. At that point, you will be in a far better position to accurately estimate how much additional money you will need to provide from other sources to realize your desired level of retirement income.

Save Early, Save Often

We all hear the stories. No matter what age group, the current level of retirement savings is far too low.

And the older you get, the less time there is to make up the shortfall. If only you had gotten an earlier start!

The earlier you start putting away a regular amount, the easier it is to build significant retirement savings. It's a simple combination of your actual savings plus the power of compounded interest over time. And the pain of procrastination is real. For example, assume a 25-year-old worker starts saving 10% of his income at age 25. To match his estimated accumulation at retirement, someone who begins saving at 40 would have to put away 30% of his income. Wait until age 55 and you'll need to stash away 50%!

There is definitely a real cost to delaying the start of your savings program. Here are five tips for those who have delayed, direct from the experts at Schwab:

- Stop just thinking about saving. Begin now!
- If available, try to max out your 401(k) contributions.
- Use an automatic investment plan or automatic payroll deposit feature.
- Review expenses periodically. You need to know where your money's going.
- Don't carry a credit card balance.

We have individual retirement account options that suit many different income and age levels. Talk to one of our certified advisors today about establishing and growing your income for the future.

Thank you for your referral.

If you're pleased with us, spread the word! We'll be happy tp give the same great service to all of your friends and business associates

Long-Term Care Can Cost Peace of Mind

The MetLife Mature Market Institute recently released its 2012 MetLife Market Survey of Long Term Care Costs. Did you know:

- Assisted living in the U.S. costs an average of $3,550 per month
- The average cost of a private room in a nursing home in the United States is $90,520 per year, or $248 per day
- Home healthcare averages $21 per hour nationally?

When setting financial plans for the future, many focus primarily on retirement income needs. These latest statistics prove it is critical not to overlook what may become your biggest expense: long-term healthcare that isn't covered by your health insurance plan or Medicare.

A long-term care insurance policy might be just the enhancement you need.