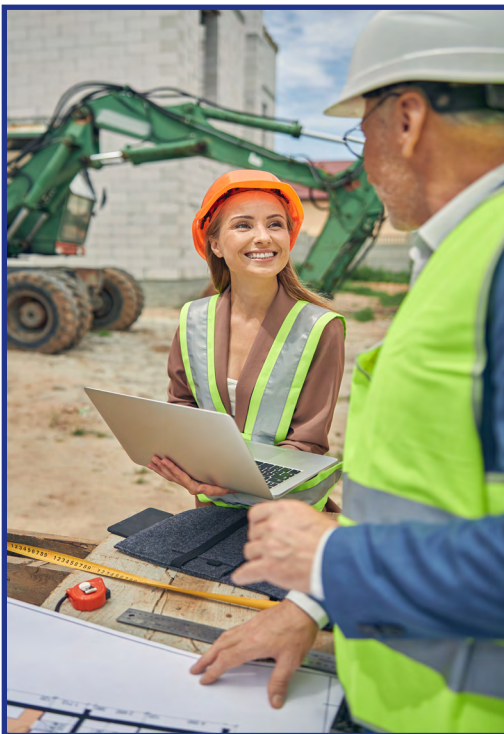




KEY TERMS

- **Attending Physician’s Statement (APS):** A report from your doctor or hospital about your medical history. Often needed for insurance or extended leave
- **Benefit Period:** How long you can receive benefits under the terms of a policy
- **Beneficiary:** The person who receives benefits (like life insurance money)
- **Elimination Period (Waiting Period):** How long you wait before benefits start
- **Exclusion:** Things your insurance doesn’t cover
- **Open/Annual Enrollment Period:** The time to sign up for benefits
- **Premium:** Payments you make for benefits, usually monthly



Understanding your employee benefits is crucial. When you start a new job and every year during open enrollment, take the time to explore your options. Your choices affect your healthcare costs (premiums, medications, doctor visits), and can even provide income if you’re unable to work due to illness or injury.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- Not all employers offer benefits, and if they do, the specifics can vary.
- Common benefits include:
 - Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) and similar plans
 - Health, disability, and life insurance
 - Retirement plans
 - Paid time off (PTO)
- Each benefit has its own rules and enrollment steps. Read the details carefully!
- Review your benefits every year. Your needs and your employer’s offerings can change.

BENEFIT OPTIONS EXPLAINED

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) and Similar Plans: These let you use pre-tax money for certain health expenses, saving you on taxes. Examples include Dependent Care Assistance Plans (DCAPs), FSAs, Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRAs), and Health Savings Accounts (HSAs). You can’t have an FSA or HSA if you have Medicare, Medicaid, Tricare, or are uninsured.

Disability Insurance:

- **Short-Term Disability (STD):** If you’re unable to work due to illness or disability, short-term disability insurance (STD) can replace a portion of your income (typically 40-70% of your salary) for a short period, usually 3 to 6 months. To receive benefits, your doctor will need to provide documentation confirming your health condition. Once approved, payments usually begin after a waiting period, often around 14 days. It’s important to remember that every STD plan is different. Eligibility requirements, waiting periods, covered disabilities, benefit amounts, exclusions, and how you use the plan can all vary. Always review your specific policy for the complete details.
- **Long-Term Disability (LTD):** Long-term disability insurance (LTD) can replace a portion of your income (typically 50-70% of your base salary) if you’re unable to work for an extended time due to illness or disability.

BENEFIT OPTIONS EXPLAINED (CONTINUED)

- **Long-Term Disability (LTD):** Your doctor will need to provide documentation of your health status, and if approved, benefits will begin after a waiting period. Many LTD plans require you to apply for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits, and your LTD plan representative or employer's benefits specialist can help with the SSDI application process. Because SSDI payments often offset LTD benefits, any SSDI benefits you receive will reduce the amount you receive from your LTD plan. Just like with STD, LTD plans have varying eligibility requirements, waiting periods, covered disabilities, benefit amounts, exclusions, and usage guidelines. It's crucial to read your specific policy carefully for all the details. Important Note: Your employer determines whether you must use your paid time off before you can claim short-term or long-term disability benefits. Contact your HR department for your company's specific rules.
- **Health Insurance:** Covers medical, surgical, and prescription drug costs. Plans vary in how they pay providers (directly or through reimbursement). Some might include limited dental and vision coverage. For a health insurance basics overview, check out www.patientadvocate.org/education.
- **Life Insurance:** Pays a designated amount to your beneficiary when you die. Some employers offer this coverage for free or at a low cost to employees. All life insurance policies vary in eligibility and usage guidelines.
- **Paid Time Off (PTO):** May include vacation, sick time, holidays, personal time, etc.
- **Retirement and Savings Plans:** Help you save for retirement. Some employers match your contributions (like with a 401k). These accounts usually move with you if you change jobs. There may be penalties for early withdrawals, but some plans allow withdrawals for long illnesses.
- **Supplemental Insurance:** Adds to your main health insurance. Examples include dental, vision, hospital indemnity, critical illness, accident, and long-term care insurance. Some pay a fixed amount to the enrollee for qualified health-related expenses and some offer additional benefits up to a certain amount.
- **Wellness Programs:** Help you stay healthy! Some examples include Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), wellness days, gym reimbursements, mental health resources, and health event discounts. These are often "use it or lose it" benefits.



ELIGIBILITY AND CHANGES

Your employer determines who's eligible for benefits (often full-time employees). They might extend benefits to part-time workers, spouses, or dependents. Employers often pay some or all of your health insurance premium, but this may not be the case for family members. Changing from full-time to part-time or reducing your hours can affect your benefits. On the other hand, working longer for your employer might give you access to more benefits, like more PTO.

WHERE TO GET INFORMATION

- **Human Resources (HR):** Your go-to for benefit questions. They can provide:
 - **A benefits package overview.** This document summarizes all the benefits available to you, including health insurance, retirement plans, disability coverage, and other perks. It should give you a high-level view of your options.
 - **An employee handbook with details on PTO and other benefits.** This handbook contains detailed information about company policies, including specifics on PTO accrual, eligibility requirements for different benefits, and other important details that might not be covered in the benefits package.
 - **Information on specific insurance and disability plans.** This includes details on what's covered, what's excluded, waiting periods, how to file a claim, and other important plan provisions.
- **Plan Documents:** For full policy details, contact the plan directly (by using the customer service number on your member ID card) or your employer's benefits contact. For the most comprehensive and accurate information about your coverage, you should always refer to the official plan documents.



RESOURCES

- [Health Insurance Education Series](#)
- [Maintaining Eligibility for Insurance](#)
- [PAF Articles: Short-Term and Long-Term Disability Benefits](#)
- [Filling the Gaps with Supplemental Insurance](#)
- [Picking a Health Plan That Works for You](#)

Disclaimer. This content is designed to educate you on common benefit choices. Not all employers offer benefits to all employees. Read your employer's Benefits Summary for details.