



# “Alternative Benefits” News

Brought to you by: Tom Buonanduci

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## ACA Open Enrollment & Changes Pending in 2018

Open Enrollment for 2018 coverage starts **November 1<sup>st</sup>**, and runs only until **December 15<sup>th</sup>** this year. Following are some updates affecting this Enrollment Period. Missing Open Enrollment could result in being uninsured for the next year and having to pay a penalty.

- **Anthem & Harvard Pilgrim** have just recently confirmed intent to participate in NH's Marketplace Exchange in 2018 (pending federal approval of filed rates).
- **Minuteman Health** will continue operations through 2017, but will not be participating on the exchange in 2018. We look forward to helping those affected to enroll in a new plan for 2018. For more information related to this, see page 2.
- **2018 Rates:** The filing deadline for rates has been extended from August 16 to September 5<sup>th</sup> for insurers participating in the 2018 Exchange. Some of you may have noticed the news last month that reported preliminary projected rate increases as much as 40% next year. This was attributable in part to the assumption that the federal government will stop reimbursements to insurers for the 'cost sharing/subsidy' payments as well as the continued uncertainty related to the ACA in Washington. Efforts are ongoing to address this situation in Washington. Actual final rates may not be available until close to Nov 1<sup>st</sup>.

We will continue to monitor developments affecting this Open Enrollment. With a shorter Open Enrollment period this year, we encourage anyone considering making plan changes, including Minuteman clients, to contact us as early as mid-September through October to start reviewing your needs for 2018. This will enable us to start the quoting, review and enrollment process as soon as final rates become available. As in past years, automatic renewal will occur for most of those that will not be changing plans, with timely payment of their new January premiums. Contact us with any questions.

## Know Anyone in Need of Health, Medigap or Life Insurance?



Health | Dental | Medigap | Life

If you have any family or friends that are in need of insurance, we would be glad to help them. Have them call us and, remember to have them mention your name & email address, as we send out a **gift or gift card** for any referral(s) from current & former clients that we end up quoting. As always, thanks for keeping us in mind!!!

## The Ins and Outs of Buying a Medicare Supplement Policy

While you may be tempted to search for a Medicare supplement policy online, it's always advisable to buy through a licensed health insurance agent. Here's why:

- Expertise from a licensed agent costs you nothing. You pay the same premium for a supplement whether you buy online or use an agent.
- You can explain any unusual circumstances, and ask questions such as: Is now a good time to switch plans? Is my doctor a covered provider under this new plan? Will my prescription copays change? Best of all, you'll receive a timely response.
- Your information is private. Some websites will sell your information, but it's secure with our licensed insurance agent. He is only interested in helping you make the best health insurance choices.
- Your agent is likely to offer more choices than most websites. If you're on one insurance company's website, you'll only see its plans. An Independent agent has access to many plans and can help you compare.
- Shopping online is time consuming. Working with an agent may be as easy as making a call to get your questions answered.

If you have an Advantage or Medigap plan now, (or have any family or friends that do) and would like to make sure that its still your best option, this may be the best time of year to check.

Your local agent is right there when you need help. He/she should be able to provide all the information you need to make these important decisions...you just need to ask!

By the way, be sure to request a FREE copy of our new book *"The Transition to Medicare – Your Choices Made Easy"* for yourself or anyone that needs help reviewing Medicare alternatives.

## How to Cut Your Electricity Bill without Really Trying

It's fall—a good time to take a fresh look at your bills to see if you can reduce them. For example, try these tips to cut your power usage and lower your electricity bills.

**Switch to LED bulbs.** About four times more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs, LEDs last for years. The “lumens” number indicates the amount of light emitted; use this to compare bulbs.

**Install a programmable thermostat.** With this device, you can automatically adjust the temperature to reflect where you are in your day—busy at home, away at work, asleep, etc. It keeps your home comfortable when you're there and reduces energy use when you're out.

**Unplug unused electrical devices.** All electronic devices sip small amounts of electricity even when they are not in use.

**Use timers and power strips to turn electrical devices on and off.** A power strip with an on/off switch can block the charge going into the strip itself as well as anything plugged into it

**Lower the temperature on your hot water heater.** A hot water heater accounts for about 14% of energy usage in a typical home. Turn the temperature down when you're not at home and up when you're doing laundry or bathing. You can also install a water heater blanket to hold the heat.

**Last but not least,** air seal your home to prevent drafts around doors and windows, and ditch that old power-hungry refrigerator in your garage that's only chilling a few cases of soda.

Now you can relax and enjoy saving!

## Worth Reading

### Why You Should Learn to Say ‘No’ More Often

By Kristin Wong  
*The New York Times*

The key to controlling your life may be hidden in that little word “no.” We don't want to miss out or antagonize people, so we don't say “no.” But say it the right way and we won't overload ourselves or offend others. As Wong advises, try saying, “I don't” instead of, “I can't.” As in, “I don't buy from door-to-door solicitors. Ever.” Not much to argue with there. **More:** <https://tinyurl.com/August-2017-Read1>

### The Psychological Importance of Doing Nothing

By Olivia Goldhill  
*Quartz*

It's time to do nothing. As this article explains, we're often so focused on getting things done that even our attempts to have fun get hijacked. People watch movies on fast-forward instead of enjoying the experience. Take a deep breath. Read this article. Then walk away from the screen and chill. **More:** <https://tinyurl.com/August-2017-Read2>

### Your Brain Can Only Take so Much Focus

By Srin Pillay  
*Harvard Business Review*

Your brain needs a break. Staying focused all the time can decrease productivity. As Pillay explains, your brain needs lots of energy to access your “default mode,” the part of your brain that you use when you do nothing. Pillay suggests ways of activating this default mode, such as allowing yourself time to daydream. And hey, did you know there are scientifically sound reasons for pretending to be someone else? **More:** <https://tinyurl.com/August-2017-Read3>

## Minuteman Health: Important Developments

Minuteman Health had recently announced that they would not be participating on the 2018 Federal Exchange. They subsequently attempted to form a new 'for profit' company for 2018, which would have enabled them to enter the more lucrative large group market, in addition to continuing to service the Individual market, but was unfortunately unable to secure the necessary financing in time.

According to public information, they will continue operations and paying claims for services provided through the end of 2017. The Massachusetts Department of Insurance is overseeing operations to protect policyholders.

We look forward to helping Minuteman policyholders to find and enroll in alternative plans to suit their needs for 2018. Don't hesitate to contact us before Open Enrollment starts Nov 1<sup>st</sup>, so that we can get a head start in reviewing your needs.

## Quick Quiz

Each month I'll give you a new question.

Just email me at Email: [HealthPlanSavings@comcast.net](mailto:HealthPlanSavings@comcast.net) or call Ph: (603) 622-5700 for the answer.

Why are squirrels credited with planting thousands of trees?

## Thanks for All Your Referrals!

I succeed when people like you refer me to your friends, neighbors and loved ones. It's the best kind of feedback I can receive.

So thanks for continuing to pass this newsletter on to people you care about.

## How to Calculate Your Life Insurance Needs

It's hard to generalize when it comes to life insurance. What one family needs may differ drastically from what another family in similar circumstances requires.

How can you know if you have enough?

One way to determine how much life insurance you need is to peg it to 10 times your yearly income. This method, however, doesn't provide much guidance to people who are not employed, such as stay-at-home parents.

If the spouse at home dies, the survivor may need life insurance funds to pay for the child care and home maintenance costs that had previously been provided free of charge.

A better way to come up with your specific number is to figure out exactly how much money your family will need at the time

of your death.

You can contact us at Alternative Benefit Solutions to request a 'Life Insurance Needs' Worksheet. Or, you can figure it as follows:

Start with your family's debt, which includes mortgages, auto and student loans, and credit-card debt. Determine future cash needs—the monthly amount needed to sustain the household—as well as major future expenses, such as tuition, new cars, medical bills, and estate-settlement costs.

Add these together, then subtract your current liquid assets—whatever your family currently has in savings, such as amounts in bank and brokerage accounts and tuition savings plans.

As an example, say you are married with

two children (for example, ages 8 and 6) and earn \$50,000 a year. If you were to die now, you'd want to support your spouse for 15 years, until your youngest child is out of college. To do this, you'll need \$750,000 in income replacement (\$50,000 for 15 years), \$200,000 for two college educations, and \$5,000 for funeral costs.

But you also may want to pay off the \$100,000 you owe on your mortgage, the \$10,000 in car loans and the \$5,000 in credit card debt. That takes your total to \$1,070 million. From that total, subtract what you've saved, and that's how much you will need in life insurance.

For multiple quotes from several top rated insurers, contact us at (603) 622-5700 or at [healthplansavings@comcast.net](mailto:healthplansavings@comcast.net).

## The Dangers Hiding in Your Juice Glass

Adults often tell children sugar is a treat to be consumed in moderation. We applaud when schools ban pop machines, and we encourage our kids to drink juice.

But here's the harsh reality: an apple a day will keep the doctor away, but drinking apple or other juices regularly may lead to serious health consequences.

As U.S. researchers pointed out recently in a *Washington Post* article, juice is really sugary water—even if it's freshly squeezed. We assume that because it's made with fruit, and sometimes vegetables, it's nutritious. Sadly, not so much. A lot of fruit's nutrients come from the skin, pulp, and seeds—elements that are not often included in commercial juices. What we're left with is sugar and water. And, according to the researchers, too much sugar can lead to obesity and diabetes, currently considered epidemics across North America.

There's more. Generally, people are more likely to overdrink than overeat. Chewing your food helps your brain understand you've eaten enough; but it doesn't get the same message when you're gulping juice. The solution: consider juice a sweet treat, with the emphasis on treat.

## Clients with Health Plans 'On-Exchange'

Remember to report to the Marketplace, any changes in circumstance, including the following... changes in household income, marriage, divorce, addition of child, changes in household compositions, gaining/losing eligibility for employer-sponsored health coverage, change of address, etc. Its important to report these as soon as possible, in part to verify eligibility for advanced tax credits, and to adjust the advanced credit amount

accordingly, etc. This is important to help prevent unexpectedly having to pay more taxes when you file your 1040 next year. So, keep in mind that anyone receiving advanced tax credits are required to file a reconciliation on their 1040, ie. of advance credits received during the year compared to the actual tax credits to which they are entitled based on actual income, household size, etc. Contact us with any questions and/or for help in making these changes.

## Worth Quoting

**This month, some quotes on the subject of health and wellness**

Eliminating the things you love is not wellness. Wellness feeds your soul and makes you feel good.

Iman

If we are creating ourselves all the time, then it is never too late to begin creating the bodies we want instead of the ones we mistakenly assume we are stuck with.

Deepak Chopra

The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.

Abraham Maslow

Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence, so that's very important for good health.

Dalai Lama

Good health and good sense are two of life's greatest blessings.

Publilius Syrus

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## Inside the Newsletter!

ACA Open Enrollment & Changes Pending in 2018  
The Ins and Outs of Buying a Medicare Supplement Policy  
How to Cut Your Electricity Bill without Really Trying  
And...  
How to Calculate Your Life Insurance Needs

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**Sudoku instructions:** Complete the  $9 \times 9$  grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine  $3 \times 3$  boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

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