

Focus on Financial Fitness

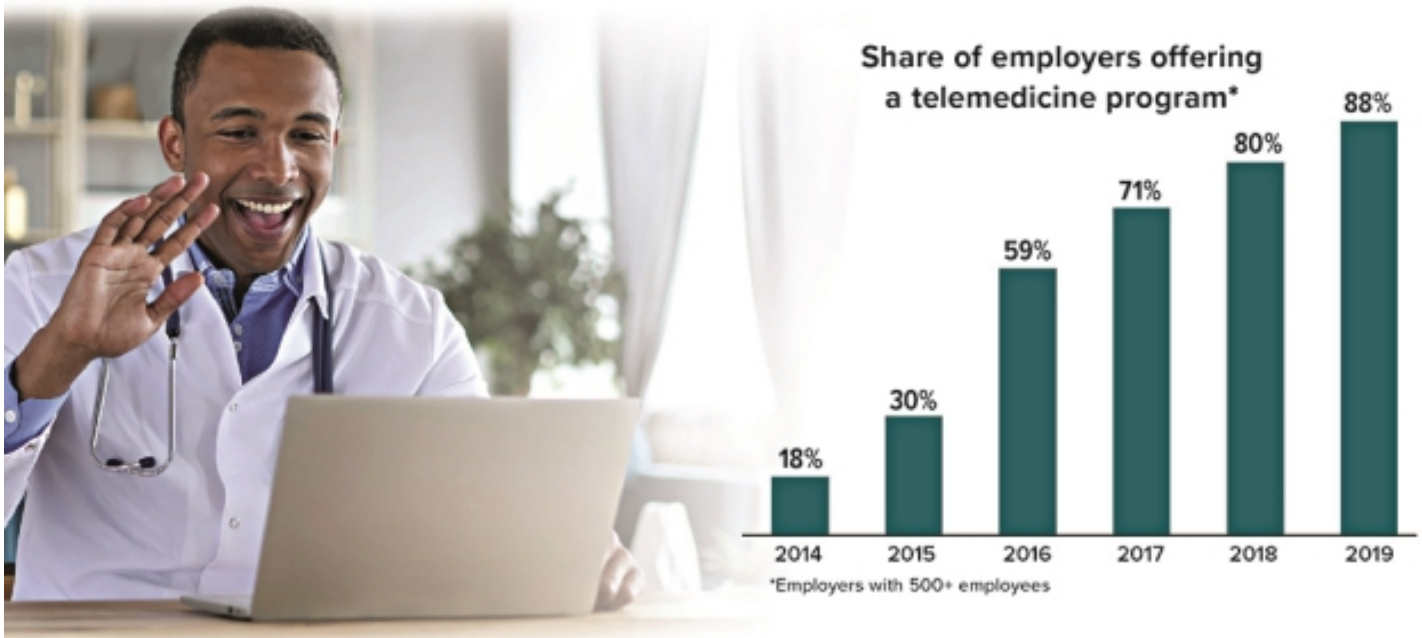


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Most Large Employer Health Plans Include Telemedicine

Over the past five years, employer enthusiasm for telemedicine benefits has surged. Almost 9 out of 10 large employers now offer employees the opportunity to virtually visit their health-care providers.



Source: Mercer National Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Plans 2019

Return of Premium Life Insurance: Protection and Cash Back

You have decided you need life insurance coverage and are considering buying a term policy. But you ask your financial professional, "Do I get any of my money back at the end of the term?" It's possible, if you consider buying a special kind of term insurance called return of premium term insurance, or ROP.

How ROP Compares to Straight Term Insurance

In general, straight term insurance provides life insurance coverage for a specific number of years, called the term. The face amount of the policy, or death benefit, is paid to your beneficiaries if you die during the term. If you live longer than the term, or you cancel your policy during the term, nothing is paid. By contrast, an ROP term life insurance policy returns some or all of the premiums you paid if you live past the term of your policy and haven't cancelled coverage. Some issuers may even pay back a pro-rated portion of your premium if you cancel the ROP policy before the end of the term. Also, the premium returned generally is not considered ordinary income, so you won't have to pay income taxes on the money you receive from the insurance company. (Please consult your tax professional.)

A return of premium feature may be appealing if you want to have a return of some or all of your premium if you outlive the policy term. Yet the cost of ROP insurance can be significantly higher than straight term insurance, depending on the issuer, age of the insured, the amount of coverage (death benefit), and length of the term. But ROP almost always costs less than permanent life insurance with the same death benefit. While straight term insurance can be purchased for terms as short as one year, most ROP insurance is sold for terms of 10 years or longer.

ROP Considerations

It's great to know you can get your money back if you outlive the term of your life insurance coverage, but there is a cost for that benefit. Also, if you die during the term of insurance coverage, your beneficiaries will receive the same death benefit from the ROP policy as they would from the less-expensive straight term policy.

Advantages and Disadvantages of ROP Term Insurance

Pros

- If you outlive the policy term, you get your money back, unlike straight term life insurance
- Premiums are generally returned free of income tax

Cons

- It's typically more expensive than straight term life insurance
- You generally don't earn interest on your money
- If you cancel the policy or let it lapse before the end of the term, you may not get your money back
- There may be a minimum amount of coverage you must buy, such as \$100,000

When choosing between straight term and ROP term, you might think about the amount of coverage you need, the amount of money you can afford to spend, and the length of time you need the coverage to continue. Your insurance professional can help you by providing information on straight term and ROP term life insurance, including their respective premium costs.

The cost and availability of life insurance depend on factors such as age, health, and the type and amount of insurance purchased. Before implementing a strategy involving life insurance, it would be prudent to make sure that you are insurable. Optional riders are available for an additional fee and are subject to contractual terms, conditions and limitations as outlined in the prospectus and may not benefit all investors. Any guarantees associated with payment of death benefits, income options, or rates of return are based on the claims paying ability and financial strength of the insurer.

Surge in COVID-19 Scams

Fraudsters and scam artists have always looked for new ways to prey on consumers. Many are now using their tactics to take advantage of consumers' heightened financial and health concerns over the coronavirus pandemic. Federal, state, and local law enforcement have issued warnings on the surge in coronavirus scams and offer advice on how consumers can help protect themselves.

Here are some of the more prevalent coronavirus scams that consumers need to watch out for, along with some tips for protecting yourself from becoming the victim of a scam.

Fraudulent Treatments, Vaccinations, and Home Test Kits

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued warnings about scam artists attempting to sell fraudulent products that claim to treat, prevent, or diagnose COVID-19. The FDA has warned consumers to be wary of companies selling products that are not authorized or approved by the FDA. You can visit [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov) for more information.

Phishing Scams

Scammers have been using phishing scams related to the coronavirus pandemic to obtain personal and financial information. Phishing scams usually involve unsolicited phone calls, letters, emails, text messages, or fake websites that pose as legitimate organizations and try to convince you to provide personal or financial information. Once scam artists obtain this information, they use it to commit identity or financial theft.

Be wary of anyone claiming to be from an official organization, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the World Health Organization. And remember that government organizations, such as the Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service, will never initiate contact with you to ask for personal and financial information, such as your Social Security number. In addition, be on the lookout for nongovernment websites with domain names that include the words "coronavirus" or "COVID-19," as they are likely to be malicious.

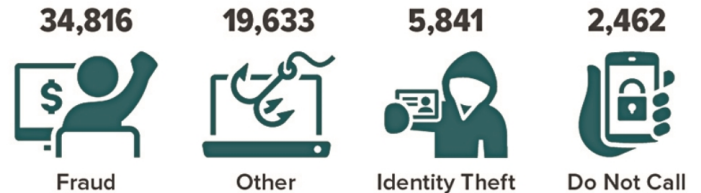
Coronavirus-Related Charity Scams

During the coronavirus pandemic, many charitable organizations have been established to help those affected by COVID-19. Unfortunately, scammers sometimes try to pose as legitimate charitable organizations in order to solicit donations from unsuspecting donors. Watch out for charities with names that are similar to more familiar or nationally known organizations such as the American Red Cross.

Before donating to a charity, make sure it is legitimate. Never donate cash, gift cards, or funds by wire transfer. The IRS website has a tool to assist you in checking out the status of a charitable organization at [irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits](https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits).

FTC COVID-19 Complaints

Over 60,000 complaints related to COVID-19 were reported to the Federal Trade Commission during the period between January 1 and June 3, 2020, with a total fraud loss of \$45.32 million.



Source: Federal Trade Commission, 2020

Protecting Yourself from Scams

Here are some steps you can take to help protect yourself from becoming the victim of a scam, including a scam related to the coronavirus pandemic:

- Don't click on suspicious or unfamiliar links in emails, text messages, social media feeds and instant messaging services.
- Don't answer a phone call if you don't recognize the phone number — let it go to voicemail and check later to verify the caller.
- Never download email attachments unless you can verify that the sender is legitimate.
- Keep device and security software up-to-date.
- Maintain strong passwords and use multi-factor authentication whenever possible.
- Never share personal or financial information via email, text message, or over the phone.

If you receive a fraudulent email, text or phone call, report it to the appropriate government agency such as the Federal Trade Commission or Internal Revenue Service and your local police department.

Back-to-College Insurance Needs

The COVID-19 crisis has created uncertainty about the college experience this fall, and insurance might not be at the top of your to-do list. But if you have a college student returning to campus, it's important to consider these three types of coverage.

Health Insurance

Health-care policies vary among schools, so be sure you understand the specific requirements and available options. Most schools offer a group health insurance plan, and some require coverage as a condition of attendance.

The most cost-effective solution may be to keep your student on your family policy. (Young adults can typically stay on their parents' health insurance policies up to age 26.) Medical care at campus facilities is often provided at relatively low cost to students, but you may want to check whether campus facilities and doctors are participating providers in your network.

Auto Insurance

If your student takes a car to school, it is typically less expensive to include the vehicle on your own policy than to purchase separate coverage. However, you should report the new location to your insurance company; your premium may go up or down depending on the location.

If your student will not take a car to school and the campus is more than 100 miles from home, he or she may qualify for a resident student discount on your policy. This would allow the student to drive your family vehicles when visiting home on vacations or weekends and may extend through the summer. Keeping those grades up can help, too — good student discounts don't end with high school!

Personal Property Insurance

If your undergraduate lives in a dorm, your homeowners insurance may cover personal property, up to a stated percentage of your total coverage (typically 10%). Check your policy and compare any coverage limits on dorm-room protection with the total value of the items your student intends to take. You might consider purchasing a separate student policy that offers more specific coverage in dorms and on campus, often with low deductibles.

If your student lives in an off-campus apartment, your homeowners policy will generally not provide coverage, so it would be wise to consider renters insurance. Be sure to ask your insurance agent about the specific coverage in your policy as it applies to your student's living situation.

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