

MAKING MEDICARE MAKE SENSE

Answers To Some of The Most Commonly Asked Medicare Questions

Q: What is the My Health, My Medicare Campaign that Medicare is launching?

A: “My Health, My Medicare” is the next step in helping the 43 million Americans with Medicare make the most of their benefits, so they can stay healthier and spend less on their medical care.

Building upon the success of the Medicare Part D prescription drug campaign, Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Dr. Mark McClellan kicked off the My Health, My Medicare Fall campaign in September.

In just two years, Medicare has undergone unprecedented improvements in benefits, including the addition of prescription drug coverage and new and updated preventive care. Equally important and thanks to our tens of thousands of dedicated partners, Medicare now has a substantial grassroots support network. With their help, Medicare will be putting a greater emphasis on prevention through the My Health, My Medicare campaign. We’re going to work with people to help them make the most of their benefits – to stay healthier so they can spend less on doctors and hospitals, and even less on prescription drugs.

By providing personalized assistance – online, on the phone and in person, with the help of partners all across the country -- we can help beneficiaries and their families make informed and confident choices about their health and Medicare coverage.

Beneficiaries now have access to a personalized Medicare Manager tool online at mymedicare.gov. Through this web tool Medicare beneficiaries or caregivers or family members can register to create their own personalized online tool that manages their Medicare benefits. After they register they will receive a secure password in the mail in about 14 days. Once a beneficiary logs on to their personal account with their password they can:

- Track their health care claims
- Check their Part B deductible status
- View their eligibility information
- Track their usage of preventive services
- Find their Medicare health or prescription plan or search for a new one
- Keep all of their Medicare information in one convenient place

Also, getting affordable prescription drugs is important. It's also critical to underscore the importance of Medicare's preventive benefits and their role in

protecting people from cancer, heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and Flu and pneumonia.

More than 38 million Medicare beneficiaries, or 90 percent, now have some form of drug coverage. More than 3 million prescriptions are being filled every day, while saving people with Medicare drug plans an average of \$1,200 a year. Program costs are 25 percent less than predicted last year. According to recent surveys, more than 80 percent of people in plans are satisfied with their coverage.

This fall, Medicare beneficiaries who wish to change prescription drug plans will have six weeks, between November 15 and December 31, to enroll in a new plan. But CMS urges beneficiaries to sign up before December 8. This will ensure they have their new prescription drug card in hand to fill prescriptions in early January.

Beneficiaries who are satisfied with their Medicare drug coverage can continue it in 2007. They are not required to take any action, and their plan will continue. But in 2007, because of strong competition, most beneficiaries will have options that cost less and that offer additional coverage, and we are providing enhanced support if they want to look at these options.”

To assist beneficiaries in making decisions about their Medicare benefits, the fall campaign has been divided into the following segments:

- **Right now**, beneficiaries should take time to compare their health needs to the coverage they currently have and prepare any questions they might have about their coverage.
- **Through October**, beneficiaries should evaluate all of the benefits available through Medicare using the one-page Medicare Checkup tool.
- **As noted earlier, during November**, beneficiaries should make their decision to join a prescription drug plan for the first time if they have not chosen one or choose a different one if desired. Remember: it's important to make a decision early – by December 8th, but if you are satisfied with the plan that you have, then you do not have to take any action.
- **And finally**, beneficiaries should take the opportunity to maximize their benefits by working with their doctor to develop a personalized plan for prevention.

Vital to the success of this year's Prescription Drug enrollment campaign was the participation of 40,000 partners nationwide who helped organize nearly 50,000 events in just six months, and our partners are vital to the success of My Health, My Medicare as well. Coupled with Medicare's first ever personalized information resources, this network is transforming Medicare's ability to help people use their coverage, stay healthier, and reduce their health care costs.

For more information about My Health, My Medicare call, 1-800-Medicare, (1-800-633-4227).