



CLIP AND SAVE, OR STICK IT ON YOUR FRIDGE:

Important dates to remember.

October 2005

Watch the mail for the *Medicare & You 2006* handbook and information from insurance and other private companies about the prescription drug plans they offer.

November 15, 2005

First day you can join a plan.

January 1, 2006

Coverage begins for those who join by December 31, 2005.

May 15, 2006

Last day to join a plan without paying a higher premium later.



OFFICIAL MEDICARE PUBLICATION

America, pull up a chair.

We've got something good to talk about.



Medicare_{Rx}
Prescription Drug Coverage

INTRODUCING

Medicare_{Rx}
Prescription Drug Coverage

CMS Pub. No. 11160

Starting January 1, 2006, Medicare will help pay for prescription drugs.

It's the biggest improvement in health care for seniors and Americans with disabilities since Medicare began 40 years ago. For the first time ever, Medicare will help pay for the prescription drugs we need to stay healthy.

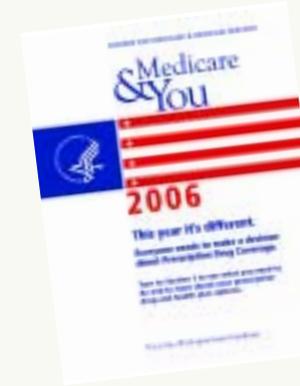
Everyone with Medicare is eligible for this coverage, regardless of income and resources, health status or current prescription expenses.

How much will Medicare pay for? For an average monthly premium of about \$32, you get two levels of coverage: standard and catastrophic. After a \$250 deductible, Medicare pays 75% of the cost of covered drugs until yearly costs reach \$2,250. When yearly out-of-pocket prescription costs exceed \$3,600 — which often happens in the event of serious health problems such as heart disease and cancer — catastrophic coverage takes effect and Medicare pays up to 95% of drug charges for the rest of the year. Many plans will offer more coverage, smaller deductibles or premiums lower than \$32. Most people with limited income and resources will pay only a few dollars for each prescription.



Thanksgiving — A Great Time to Pull Up a Chair and Talk.

Any time is a good time to talk about Medicare prescription drug coverage. A *great* time is Thanksgiving weekend. When the games are over and the dishes are cleared, when you gather around the kitchen or dining room table to catch up, take a few minutes to talk about this important coverage. It could change the life of someone you love.



Look for the *Medicare & You 2006* handbook in October.

Medicare will send *Medicare & You 2006*, the official Medicare government handbook, to every Medicare household. This handbook explains in detail what prescription drug coverage means to everyone with Medicare.



4 things to think and talk about when choosing a Medicare prescription drug plan.

Every person with Medicare has two choices: You can join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan that covers prescription drugs only and keep your Original Medicare coverage. Or you can join a Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plan that covers doctor and hospital care as well as prescriptions. If you are a retiree with prescription drug coverage, look for information from your former employer or union this fall about how they will work with Medicare and what you should do. The following discussion points will help guide your decision.



1 Coverage.

Medicare prescription drug coverage is insurance that covers both brand-name and generic prescription drugs at participating pharmacies in your area. Each plan has to provide access to medically necessary prescription drugs. Compare plans on how they meet your needs.



2 Cost.

Plans may have a monthly premium, deductible or copayments, and may set a limit on what they will pay. So compare monthly premiums and determine copayments and yearly deductible. Plans will also discount the price of the drugs they cover. With Medicare's new drug coverage, a typical person with Medicare, who has no prescription drug coverage today, will save about 50% on prescription drug costs.



3 Convenience.

Prescription drug plans contract with local pharmacies. Look for conveniently located pharmacies that participate in the Medicare prescription drug program. Also note that some plans offer prescriptions through the mail.

4 Peace of mind. Now and in the future.

Even if you do not take a lot of prescription drugs now, it's still good to consider joining. As we age, most people need prescription drugs to stay healthy. Signing up for Medicare prescription drug coverage today can help protect your savings from high prescription drug costs often associated with major health problems such as heart disease and cancer. Should yearly out-of-pocket drug costs exceed \$3,600, Medicare will pay up to 95% of the bill.





Questions? Need more information? Medicare is here to help.

There are many ways you can get helpful information and answers to your questions about drug plans in your area.

In person, in your community.

Medicare is working in communities across the country to ensure you will have access to information about this new benefit. You can also receive free, personalized assistance in comparing plan choices from your State Health Insurance Assistance Program.

On the Web.

Starting October 13, 2005, a new, easy-to-use comparison tool will be available on www.medicare.gov. You can use this tool to compare plans based upon your needs.

Over the phone.

Call **1-800-MEDICARE** (1-800-633-4227) to talk to a Medicare representative, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

A simple conversation can change a life.

Medicare prescription drug coverage is important. It's a vital addition to Medicare that will help people save money and live better, healthier lives. It will extend the promise of modern drug treatment to everyone with Medicare. If you have Medicare, we strongly urge that you learn more about this new coverage. If you have family and friends with Medicare, we ask that you help them learn more about it, too. Read this booklet. Then pull up a chair and talk to someone you love or care about who has Medicare. Mention that Medicare prescription drug coverage is coming. Explain how signing up for this coverage requires choosing between plans and making a decision. Discuss what these plans offer in terms of cost, coverage, convenience and peace of mind. And, if needed, offer to help them enroll.

Got questions? Look on the next-to-last pages of this booklet for places where you can get answers.

In the next few weeks the *Medicare & You 2006* handbook will be mailed to all people with Medicare. It will have detailed information and a list of plans in your area.

Imagine yourself, and millions of others like you, changing lives. One conversation at a time.

