

Turn to Us

Autumn 2021



MEDICARE

It's not just for your grandparents!

More than 50 million Americans, age 65 or older, have healthcare coverage through Medicare, but another 9 million are eligible for Medicare coverage **because they are entitled to disability benefits.** Qualified individuals receive coverage after 24 months' worth of disability payments. For Medicare, it doesn't matter whether you receive the 24 months of benefits in one lump sum or spread out over time. Please note there are two exceptions for this rule and are covered from the time they are diagnosed as disabled: kidney dialysis patients and those who suffer from ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease.

Medicare coverage is divided into four major parts: A, B, C, and D.

Part A covers inpatient hospital care, skilled nursing services, dialysis, and hospice care. For Part A there is no separate premium. It's funded by the Medicare taxes paid by you and your employer while you are working.

Part B covers most services provided by doctors, along with therapy, diagnostic tests, and medical equipment. Unlike Part A, there is a monthly premium for Part B coverage, this can be deducted from the Social Security disability payments given monthly. Part B also has deductibles, co-pays, and certain exclusions from coverage. For a separate premium, you can obtain supplemental coverage from a private insurance company, sometimes referred to as Medigap insurance, which covers some or all of the expenses that Part B does not pay for.

Part C is an alternative to coverage under traditional Medicare, and is also known as the Advantage Plan. It works something like an HMO and is available through private insurance companies. Premiums are usually lower than those for Part B; sometimes there may be no premium at all. Like an HMO, an Advantage Plan often requires a referral from your primary care doctor to a specialist, and the choice of doctors or hospitals may be quite limited. Certain services may not be covered at all. On the other hand, Part C plans may provide coverage for dental or vision care not available under traditional Medicare.

Part D deals with prescription medications; the coverage is obtained from private insurance companies. There are many choices available with different premiums and different coverages. Some plans may limit you to using a particular pharmacy.

With so many choices available, Medicare can be difficult to navigate. The Area Agency on Aging for your county can steer you to someone who can help you make the necessary decisions about coverage.