



YOUR GUIDED PATH TO MEDICARE

An essential resource for Californians
who are new to Medicare.



If you're new to Medicare, you've come to the right place

As someone who will soon be eligible for Medicare, it's important for you to understand your choices. This booklet provides you with an overview of Medicare and your coverage options. This will help you as you explore plans and find the right choice for you.

Remember, as you prepare to make your Medicare choices, Blue Shield of California will be here for you every step of the way. You can count on us to help make it easier to get the healthcare benefits you need.

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Medicare: Health insurance for you

Medicare is health insurance provided by the U.S. federal government for people who qualify.

You qualify for Medicare if you fall into one of these categories:

- People aged 65 or older
- Certain people under 65 with disabilities
- People of any age with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant)

If you qualify for Medicare, then Medicare benefits can replace other types of health insurance you may have, or have had, in the past.



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What Medicare coverage options are right for you?



You can choose **Original Medicare** (Parts A and B), alone.

Original Medicare is provided by the government to help cover your medical needs after you retire. However, it's important to remember that **Original Medicare covers only about 80 percent of most people's medical expenses.**

Also, Original Medicare **does not include prescription drug coverage.** If you want prescription drug coverage, you'll need to add a separate Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan.



You can add a **Medicare Supplement** plan to your Original Medicare coverage.

Medicare Supplement plans help pay your portion of the costs not covered by Original Medicare. These plans also give you the flexibility to see any doctor who accepts Medicare. You must be enrolled in Original Medicare to add this coverage.

Medicare Supplement plans **do not include prescription drug coverage,** so you may also want to add a Part D Prescription Drug plan to complete your coverage.

PDP

You can add a **Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan** to your Original Medicare and Medicare Supplement coverage.

Before you choose a prescription drug plan, be sure to check to see if the drugs you take regularly are covered in the plan's formulary. You must be enrolled in Original Medicare to add this coverage.

MA

You can choose an all-in-one **Medicare Advantage Plan (Part C)**.

Medicare Advantage plans provide all your Original Medicare coverage and more. They cover Parts A and B, and can include Part D prescription drugs. Plus, many plans offer extra benefits not covered by Original Medicare.



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When can you enroll?

Enrollment Periods for Medicare Parts A and B

Initial Enrollment Period

As you approach 65, you may enroll in Original Medicare (Medicare Parts A and B) 3 months before the month you turn 65. Your Initial Enrollment Period lasts for 7 months: **starting 3 months before** the month you turn 65 and **ending 3 months after** the month you turn 65.



General Enrollment Period

If you miss your Initial Enrollment Period, you can sign up during Medicare's General Enrollment Period (January 1–March 31), and your coverage will start July 1.

IMPORTANT: Avoid costly late enrollment penalties for Medicare Part B during your Initial Enrollment Period.

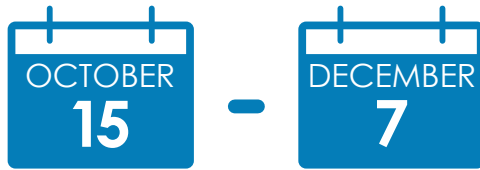
[Learn more](#) about Part B penalties.

Medicare Advantage and Part D Enrollment Periods

You can enroll in a Medicare Advantage and Part D plan after you enroll in Medicare Parts A and B.

Annual Enrollment Period

Except under special circumstances, Medicare beneficiaries may choose or change Part C or Part D plans each year, from **October 15 through December 7**. This is the Annual Enrollment Period (AEP). The choices you make during the AEP **take effect January 1** of the upcoming year.



Special Enrollment Periods

There are certain special circumstances when you may join a Part C or Part D plan at other times of the year, including:

- If you have both Medicare and Medicaid
- If you or your spouse stops working or loses employer group coverage, and you are no longer covered
- If you move to a community not served by your current plan

Medicare Supplement Enrollment Periods

Guaranteed Acceptance Period

One of the most popular times to enroll in a Medicare Supplement plan is the 6-month period starting the first day of the month that you're 65 and enrolled in Medicare Part B. During this time, you may enroll in a Medicare Supplement plan without having to take a medical exam or answer health questions and your acceptance is guaranteed.

Once you turn 65, you may enroll in a Medicare Supplement plan at any time during the year. If you enroll outside of your initial eligibility window, you may be required to take a medical exam or answer questions about your health. And acceptance may not be guaranteed.



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Your Medicare to-do list

If you are approaching your Medicare eligibility, the first thing you need to do is understand the basics of Medicare and when you should enroll. If you plan to enroll at age 65, this simple timeline will help you to be sure you're on track. And remember that we are here to help you, every step of the way.

6 months before you turn 65

Understand the basics of Medicare and the choices and timelines that apply to you.

Decide which coverage options are most important to you based on your needs and budget.

3 months before you turn 65

Enroll in Original Medicare (Parts A and B).

Consider which additional plans do the best job of completing your Medicare coverage.

Your 65th birthday month

Sign up for the additional Medicare coverage you've chosen. You must already be enrolled in Original Medicare (Parts A and B) before you can enroll in additional coverage.

3 months after you turn 65

Your deadline for enrolling in Original Medicare (Parts A and B) is at the end of this month. If you miss it, you may be charged a late enrollment penalty.

Enroll in additional Medicare coverage to pay for some of the costs that Original Medicare doesn't cover.

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The Parts of Original Medicare:

Original Medicare consists of Part A and Part B



Part A
is hospital coverage.

Part A covers many services typically provided in a hospital or other facility, including:

- Inpatient care at a hospital
- Care at a skilled nursing facility
- Hospice care
- Some home health services

Most people automatically get Part A without having to pay a monthly premium.



Part B
is medical coverage.

Part B covers services typically provided at a doctor's office, including:

- Outpatient care
- Medically necessary services and supplies (needed to diagnose or treat a medical condition)
- Preventive services (needed to prevent or detect illness)

Most Medicare beneficiaries pay a monthly premium for Part B coverage.



Some things to remember:

Original Medicare doesn't cover the cost of all medical expenses. That's why many people choose to enroll in a Medicare Advantage Plan or get additional coverage to help lower their out-of-pocket costs.

You need to enroll on time to avoid costly penalties. When you retire, you'll have a limited time to enroll for **Medicare Part B** coverage without incurring a **late enrollment penalty, which you may have to pay for as long as you have Part B.** Your monthly Part B premium may go up 10% for each 12 month-period that you could have had Part B but didn't sign up. Here are ways to avoid incurring a penalty:

- If you're retiring at 65, you must enroll in Part B during your Initial Enrollment Period. ([See Medicare Enrollment Periods.](#))
- If you continue working after you turn 65 and have credible healthcare coverage (such as an employer's group plan), you could qualify for a Special Enrollment Period after you retire — so you can enroll in Part B without penalty.



Other Parts of Medicare:

Medicare Part C and Part D are important options



Part C

is also known as Medicare Advantage.

Part C Medicare Advantage plans are provided by private insurance companies with a Medicare contract. Medicare Advantage includes all of your Part A and Part B coverage as well as extra benefits. For some plans, you pay a monthly premium.



Part D

is prescription drug coverage.

Part D coverage is designed to help lower your prescription drug costs. Part D coverage is available in standalone plans or may be included with a Medicare Advantage plan.



Some things to remember:

Medicare Part C and Part D are important Medicare options offered by private insurance companies with a Medicare contract to provide this coverage in your community, such as Blue Shield of California.

Enroll on time to avoid costly Medicare penalties.

Once you enroll in Medicare Part B, you have a limited time to choose your **Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage** without incurring a monthly penalty for late enrollment.

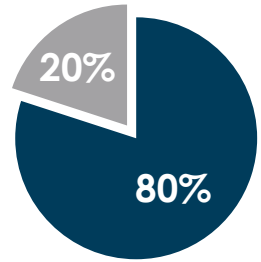
- If you retire at 65, you may owe a late enrollment penalty if at any time after your Initial Enrollment Period is over, there's a period of 63 or more days in a row when you don't have Medicare drug coverage or other credible prescription drug coverage. You'll generally have to pay the penalty for as long as you have Medicare drug coverage.
- If you continue working after you turn 65 and have creditable healthcare coverage (such as an employer's group plan), you could qualify for a Special Enrollment Period after you retire – so you can enroll in Part D without penalty.



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Why you might need additional coverage

Original Medicare covers about 80 percent of your medical and hospital expenses



Original Medicare doesn't cover the cost of all medical expenses. It covers about 80 percent of eligible medical and hospital expenses, leaving you responsible for the other 20 percent – and there is no limit to the out-of-pocket amount you may pay.

That's why many Medicare beneficiaries choose additional Medicare coverage. The following sections explain your options for getting the additional coverage you may need.

Original Medicare does not pay for:

- Your Part B monthly premium
- Parts A and B deductibles
- Parts A and B coinsurance
- Most prescription drug costs

Get more flexibility with a reliable Medicare Supplement plan

Remember, Original Medicare covers about 80% of your eligible hospital and medical expenses. Medicare Supplement plans are provided by private insurance companies and are designed to help pay your portion of those costs that Original Medicare does not cover.

Also, it is important to keep in mind that Medicare Supplement plans do not include prescription drug coverage. If you want prescription coverage, you'll need to add a separate standalone prescription drug plan.

Medicare Supplement plans:

- Cover many of Original Medicare's out-of-pocket expenses.
- Provide flexibility to choose any doctor or hospital that accepts Medicare, no referral necessary.
- Travel with you nationwide (in some cases, worldwide).
- Provide benefits that are standardized by the government, with plan variations designed to cater to different needs and budgets.

Blue Shield of California offers you a selection of Medicare Supplement plans, as well as the Part D Prescription Drug plan you may need to complete your coverage.

SAVE on your medications with a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (Part D)

If you take medications every day for a chronic condition, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, prescription drug coverage is an essential benefit. Before you enroll in a prescription drug plan, ask if your specific drugs are covered — and find out how much they'll cost. Also, check to see if the prescription coverage is accepted at your local pharmacies and if the plan offers a mail service prescription option.

Medicare Prescription Drug Plans:

- Help pay for prescription medications not covered under Original Medicare.
- Are offered by private insurance companies, with standardized benefits approved by Medicare.
- Cover generic and brand-name drugs.
- Are also available as a standalone plan to complement Original Medicare and Medicare Supplement coverage.
- Are often included in Medicare Advantage plans.

Blue Shield of California offers Medicare Part D prescription coverage in a standalone plan or as Part of an all-in-one Medicare Advantage plan.

An all-in-one Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug Plan (Part C) offers VALUE

When you join a Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug plan, your coverage includes prescriptions, care from doctors and hospitals, as well as extra benefits designed to help keep you feeling well.

Because much of the cost of these programs is provided through the government contract, premiums are generally lower than what you might pay for other types of plans.

Medicare Advantage Plans:

- Provide all of your Original Medicare Part A (hospital) and Part B (medical) coverage.
- Often include prescription drug coverage, with no added premium.
- Provide the convenience of dealing with just one insurer for all your claims.
- Often provide valuable extra benefits, like additional days in the hospital as well as dental, vision, and hearing coverage.
- Limit your financial liability by establishing annual and lifetime limits on your out-of-pocket costs.
- May require you to use in-network doctors and hospitals.
- Are provided by private insurance companies with a Medicare contract.

Dual Special Needs Plans (D-SNP)






A special kind of Medicare Advantage plan

If you're eligible for both Medi-Cal and Medicare, there are Dual Special Needs Plans (D-SNP) which are Medicare Advantage plans specifically designed to meet your unique needs. These plans offer you many additional services and benefits, including an assigned Care Navigator who can help coordinate between the two programs and provide patient-focused care that is easier to navigate.

How do these different plan types work together – or separately?

With **Original Medicare**, you can add a separate **Medicare Supplement plan** and **Prescription Drug plan** to help complete your coverage.

Or you can choose an all-in-one **Medicare Advantage plan** to provide all of your Medicare benefits, including prescription drug coverage.

	MEDICARE Part A (Hospital coverage)	MEDICARE Part B (Medical coverage)	MEDICARE Part D (Drug coverage)	Hospital and physician deductibles, coinsurance, and copays	Other Benefits
 Original Medicare	✓	✓			
 Original Medicare + Prescription Drug Plan	✓	✓	✓		
 Original Medicare + Medicare Supplement	✓	✓		✓	✓
 Original Medicare + Medicare Supplement + Prescription Drug Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 Medicare Advantage (usually includes Prescription Drug Plan)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Get more tips, advice and information about Medicare from Blue Shield of California

Continue your Medicare education journey today by visiting the Blue Shield of California website and viewing our [Medicare Enlightenment series](#). These helpful videos will provide even more details about Medicare, your benefits, enrollment, and more.

Let us help make your transition to Medicare easy and rewarding

No matter what kind of plan you decide is best for you, Blue Shield of California offers the coverage you need, with benefits you value. When you're ready, it will be our privilege to provide you with the Medicare benefits you need — and the service you deserve.

Learn more about [Blue Shield of California Medicare plans](#).

Speak to a Blue Shield of California Medicare adviser by calling:

(877) 662-1979 [TTY: 711]

8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week from October 1 through March 31, and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., weekdays from April 1 through September 30.

Nondiscrimination and Language Assistance Services

The company complies with applicable state and federal civil rights laws. We also offer language assistance services at no additional cost. View our nondiscrimination notice and language assistance notice: blueshieldca.com/notices. You can also call for language assistance services: **(866) 346-7198 (TTY: 711)**

If you are unable to access the website above and would like to receive a copy of the nondiscrimination notice and language assistance notice, please call Customer Care at **(800) 776-4466 (TTY: 711)**.

Servicios de asistencia en idiomas y avisos de no discriminación

La compañía cumple con las leyes de derechos civiles federales y estatales aplicables. También, ofrecemos servicios de asistencia en idiomas sin costo adicional.

Vea nuestro aviso de no discriminación y nuestro aviso de asistencia en idiomas en blueshieldca.com/notices. Para obtener servicios de asistencia en idiomas, también puede llamar al **(866) 346-7198 (TTY: 711)**.

Si no puede acceder al sitio web que aparece arriba y desea recibir una copia del aviso de no discriminación y del aviso de asistencia en idiomas, llame a Atención al Cliente al **(800) 776-4466 (TTY: 711)**.

非歧視通知和語言協助服務

本公司遵守適用的州及聯邦政府的民權法。同時，我們免費提供語言協助服務。如需檢視我司的非歧視通知和語言幫助通知，請造訪blueshieldca.com/notices。您還可致電尋求語言協助服務：**(866) 346-7198 (TTY: 711)**。

如果您無法造訪上述網站，且希望收到一份非歧視通知和語言幫助通知的副本，請致電客戶服務部，電話：**(800) 776-4466 (TTY: 711)**。

Blue Shield of California is an independent member of the Blue Shield Association.