



Medicare Open Enrollment Kicks Off

Medicare's Open Enrollment period began on October 15 and runs through December 7. If you are covered by Medicare, it's time to compare your current coverage with other available options. Medicare plans can change every year, and you may want to switch to a health or prescription drug plan that better suits your needs or your budget.

During this period, you can:

- Switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan, and vice versa
- Change from one Medicare Advantage Plan to a different Medicare Advantage Plan
- Change from a Medicare Advantage Plan that offers prescription drug coverage to a Medicare Advantage Plan that doesn't offer prescription drug coverage, and vice versa
- Join a Medicare Part D drug plan, switch from one Part D plan to another, or drop your Part D coverage

Any changes made during Open Enrollment are effective as of January 1, 2025.

Original Medicare (Part A hospital insurance and Part B medical insurance) is administered directly by the federal government and includes standardized premiums, deductibles, copays, and coinsurance costs.

A Medicare Advantage (Part C) Plan is an alternative to Original Medicare. Medicare Advantage Plans cover all Original Medicare services and often include prescription drug coverage and extra benefits. They are offered by private companies approved by Medicare. Premiums, deductibles, copays, and coinsurance costs vary by plan.

Medicare Part D drug plans, like Medicare Advantage Plans, are offered by private companies and help cover prescription drug costs.

Key changes for 2025

- Medicare Part D: As of January 1, all Medicare Part D plans will include an annual \$2,000 cap on out-of-pocket on costs for prescription drugs covered by the plan. No copayment or coinsurance costs for Part D drugs will apply for the rest of the year. In addition, enrollees can opt in to a Medicare Prescription Payment Plan to pay their out-of-pocket prescription drug costs monthly rather than all at once at the pharmacy.
- Medicare Advantage: During the summer, Medicare Advantage Plans will send out a mid-year statement to enrollees that shows supplemental benefits available but unused and remind enrollees how to take advantage of them.
- Original Medicare: Starting in July, more caregivers of people with dementia who are not residing in a nursing home and are covered by Original Medicare may have access to a model program called Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE). This program, which initially rolled out in July 2024, provides a 24/7 support line, care coordination, referrals to community-based social services, caregiver training, and respite services. Although this program will be expanded in 2025, it won't be available in all communities. Visit the CMS Innovation website at [cms.gov](https://www.cms.gov) to find out if a program is available in your area.

Compare your options

Start by reviewing any materials your plan has sent you. Look at the coverage offered, the costs, and the network of providers, which may be different than last year. Maybe your health has changed, or you anticipate needing medical care or new or pricier prescription drugs.

If your current plan doesn't meet your health-care needs or fit your budget, you can make changes. If you're satisfied with what you currently have, you don't have to do anything — your current coverage will continue.

If you're interested in a Medicare Advantage Plan or a Medicare Part D drug plan, you can use the Medicare Plan Finder on [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) to see which plans are available in your area and check their overall quality rating. For personalized information, you can log in or create an account to compare your plan to others and see prescription drug costs.

Get help

Determining what coverage you have now and comparing it to other Medicare plans can be confusing and complicated, but help is available. Call 1-800-MEDICARE or visit the Medicare website to use the Plan Finder and other tools that can make comparing plans easier. You can also call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for free, personalized counseling. Visit shiphelp.org to find the phone number and website address for your state.