

Turning 65? Don't forget Medicare!



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You may not be aware, but if you are eligible for Medicare, then eligibility begins at age 65, even when you don't intend to take your Social Security benefits until later. There are many parts to Medicare, and numerous rules and enrollment periods making the Medicare decision making process quite complex. **We recommend anyone turning age 65 contact the Social Security Administration (www.ssa.gov or go to www.medicare.gov) no later than three months before the month of their 65th birthday** to determine their eligibility. The initial Medicare enrollment period runs for seven months, starting three months before the month you turn 65 and ending three months after the month you turn 65. **If you do not enroll during that time, it may end up costing you money.**

If you don't sign up during this initial seven month enrollment period, you may not be able to sign up for **Medicare Part B** coverage, which covers outpatient care, until the next General Enrollment Period (from January 1 to March 31 for benefits beginning July 1). Besides the possibility of an additional wait for benefits, if you missed your initial enrollment period, you will incur a 10% premium penalty for each year you wait beyond your initial enrollment period –

and the penalty will continue as long as you have Part B. As you can see, it is very important that you determine your eligibility for these benefits in a timely manner.

There is another penalty on the **Medicare Part D** drug plan if you miss the initial enrollment period, and this penalty accrues monthly. However, if you can show you had drug coverage elsewhere that is as good or better, you may avoid the late fee. If you miss your initial enrollment period for Part D, you will have to wait to enroll during the Open Enrollment Period, which is from October 15 to December 7 for coverage beginning January 1. You also have numerous options for Part D or equivalent coverage (Medicare Advantage Plan or Part C), so you will need to do some research here.

For Medicare Part D or a Medicare Advantage Plan, if you are still working at age 65, you will need to figure out how Medicare works with your workplace or retiree coverage and learn where there may be gaps in coverage. There are also a list of reasons that you may qualify for a **Special Enrollment Period (SEP)** that exempts you from the penalties of late enrollment. There is actually a fairly long list of situations on the Medicare website that can potentially qualify you for a SEP.

Medigap is an optional, supplemental insurance plan you can purchase to help pay for some of the health costs Medicare doesn't cover. The best time to buy a Medigap policy is during your Medigap open enrollment period, which lasts for six months and begins on the first day of the month in which you are 65 or older and enrolled in Medicare Part B.

During this period, you can buy a Medigap policy without fear of being turned down or charged more because of a past or present health problem. After this six-month period, you may be denied coverage or charged more due

to a pre-existing condition, which makes this period very important for many. If you join a **Medicare Advantage plan, also called Medicare Part C**, you don't need and cannot be sold a Medigap policy.

There are many more rules surrounding applications and eligibility for Medicare and the different plans available, and this is not meant to be a complete guide. We do, however, want to remind you and your loved ones how important it is to check into the benefits available and the rules for applying prior to a 65th birthday. We know this is all very confusing, and we recommend you visit the government's Medicare website at www.medicare.gov for the best information. There are also helpful tip sheets available at the www.medicare.gov website. We encourage you to use the official government websites for research on your benefits. We have links to both the Social Security and the Medicare websites on our website at www.rogersgreen.com under the "Helpful Web Links" tab. Also consider scheduling an appointment to speak with someone at the Social Security office about your Medicare coverage options by contacting 1-800-772-1213.

If you are nearing important retirement planning ages such as age 62 for Social Security, age 65 for Medicare, or age 70½ for your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), or for any other retirement planning guidance you may need, please contact us through our website or at 770-931-1414 to schedule a free consultation to review your situation. We are here to help!

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