

# Medicare FAQ's

Contact Social Security to sign up for Medicare.

You can either:

- Sign up for just  
Part A (Hospital Insurance)  
  
and  
Part B (Medical Insurance).
- Apply to get benefits from Social Security (or the Railroad Retirement Board). You'll get Part A automatically once you start getting benefits. You'll choose if you want Part B when you apply for benefits.

## Know when to sign up for Part B

You can only sign up for Part B at certain times. If you don't sign up for Part B when you turn 65, you might have to wait to sign up and pay a monthly late enrollment penalty. [Find out when you can sign up.](#) How much is the Part B penalty?

## When you're ready, contact Social Security to sign up:

- [Apply online \(at Social Security\)](#) – This is the easiest and fastest way to sign up and get any financial help you may need. You'll need to create your secure *my* Social Security account to sign up for Medicare or apply for Social Security benefits online.

## Why do I contact Social Security?

Medicare provides your coverage, but **you'll sign up through Social Security** [The United States Social Security Administration \(ssa.gov\)](#) (or the Railroad Retirement Board) because they need to see if you're eligible for Medicare, including whether you (or another qualifying person) paid Medicare taxes long enough to get Part A without having to pay a monthly premium. They also process requests to sign up for Medicare Part B.

- Most people don't pay a premium for Part A, but you do pay a monthly premium for Part B. Get quick view of costs. 2021 Part B premium \$148.50, 2022 Part B premium \$170.10 per month paid to CMS.
- If you can't afford the monthly premium, there are programs to help lower your costs. [Get details about cost saving programs.](#)
- About 2 weeks after you sign up, CMS will mail you a [welcome package](#) with your Medicare card.

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## Ways to sign up:

- [Online \(at Social Security\)](#) – It's the easiest and fastest way to sign up and get any financial help you may need. (You'll need to create your secure *my* Social Security account to sign up for Medicare or apply for benefits.)
- Call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users can call 1-800-325-0778.
- [Contact your local Social Security office.](#)
- If you or your spouse worked for a railroad, call the Railroad Retirement Board at 1-877-772-5772.

## What else do I need to know?

- Medicare can help cover your costs for health care, like hospital visits and doctors' services.

## Sign up when you're first eligible for:

- Part A (Hospital Insurance)
- Part B (Medical Insurance)

Generally, you're first eligible to sign up for Part A and Part B starting **3 months before you turn 65 and ending 3 months after the month you turn 65.**

### **Avoid the penalty**

If you don't sign up when you're first eligible, you'll have to wait to sign up and go months without coverage. You might also pay a monthly penalty for as long as you have Part B. The penalty goes up the longer you wait to sign up. How much is the Part B penalty?

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# Ready to sign up for Part A & Part B

Contact Social Security (or the Railroad Retirement Board) to sign up for Part A (Hospital Insurance)

and

Part B (Medical Insurance)

Why don't I contact Medicare to sign up for Part A and Part B?

You don't need to create a Medicare account to sign up. After you sign up and get your Medicare Number, you can create your secure Medicare account. You can also join a plan or buy supplemental insurance to get more coverage.

You can only sign up for Part B (or Part A if you have to pay a premium for it) at certain times. [Learn about Part A & Part B sign up periods.](#)

## I want to sign up for only Part A or both Part A & Part B

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Once you're eligible to sign up for Medicare (usually 3 months before you turn 65), you have 2 options:

1. Sign up to get only Medicare coverage.
2. Apply to start getting benefits from Social Security (or the Railroad Retirement Board). Once you're approved to start getting benefits, you'll automatically get Part A coverage. You'll choose if you want Part B coverage when you apply for benefits.

Once you sign up (or are approved for benefits), you'll get a [welcome package](#) with your Medicare card.

- Call 1-800-772-1213. TTY users can call 1-800-325-0778.
- Contact [your local Social Security office](#).
- If you or your spouse worked for a railroad, call the Railroad Retirement Board at 1-877-772-5772.

If you don't qualify for Part A without having to pay a monthly premium, you might be able to buy Part A. To buy Part A, you must also sign up for Part B.

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## I have Part A & want to add Part B

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Contact Social Security to sign up for Part B:

- Fill out [Form CMS-40B \(Application for Enrollment in Medicare Part B\)](#). Send the completed form to your local Social Security office by fax or mail.
- Call 1-800-772-1213. TTY users can call 1-800-325-0778.
- [Contact your local Social Security office.](#)
- If you or your spouse worked for a railroad, call the Railroad Retirement Board at 1-877-772-5772.

### **Signing up because you're retiring or lost job-based coverage:**

To qualify for a

Special Enrollment Period, you'll also need to have the employer fill out a [Form CMS-L564 \(Request for Employment Information\)](#).

- If the employer can't fill it out, complete Section B of the form as best you can, but don't sign it. You'll need to submit proof of job-based health insurance. What forms of proof can I send?

### **Forms of job-based health insurance proof:**

- Income tax form that shows health insurance premiums paid
- W-2s showing pre-tax medical contributions
- Pay stubs showing health insurance premium deductions
- Health insurance cards with a policy effective date
- Explanations of benefits paid by the employer group health plan
- Statements or receipts that show payment of health insurance premiums

- You can [apply online \(at Social Security\)](#) - select "Already Enrolled in Medicare" from the menu. Or fax or mail your forms to your [local Social Security office](#).

### **What if I have a Health Savings Account (HSA)?**

To avoid a tax penalty, you and your employer should stop contributing to your HSA at least 6 months before you apply for Medicare. This is because:

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- If you're 65 or older, your Part A coverage will start up to 6 months back from the date you sign up for Medicare or apply for benefits from Social Security (or the Railroad Retirement Board).
- You're not eligible to make contributions to your HSA after you have Medicare.

If your Medicare Part A coverage overlaps when you made contributions, you'll have to pay a tax penalty.

You can withdraw money from your HSA after your Medicare coverage starts to help pay your share of costs (like deductibles, premiums, coinsurance, or copayments).

## How soon before I retire should I apply for Medicare?

### 3 months

Generally, we advise people to file for Medicare benefits **3 months before age 65**. Remember, Medicare benefits can begin no earlier than age 65. If you are already receiving Disability Social Security, you will automatically be enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B without an additional application.

If you didn't sign up when you were first eligible for Medicare, you can sign up during the General Enrollment Period between January 1 and March 31 each year, unless you are eligible for a [Special Enrollment Period](#).

If you sign up:	Coverage starts:
Before the month you turn 65	The month you turn 65
The month you turn 65	The next month
1 month after you turn 65	2 months after you sign up
2 or 3 months after you turn 65	3 months after you sign up

## When coverage starts

Generally, coverage starts the month after you sign up if elected during Initial Election Period or during a Special Election Period.

## Special situations include:

**You have health insurance through a job and still working** — You can sign up for Part A and Part B any time as long as:

- You have group health plan coverage.
- You or your spouse (or a family member if you're disabled) is working for the employer that provides your health coverage.

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You also have 8 months to sign up after you or your spouse (or your family member if you're disabled) stop working or you lose group health plan coverage (whichever happens first).

Your 8-month Special Enrollment Period starts when you stop working, even if you choose COBRA or other coverage that's not Medicare.

**You're a volunteer, serving in a foreign country** — [Contact Social Security for more details.](#)

**Certain situations for people with TRICARE** — [Contact TRICARE for more details.](#)

## Situations that don't qualify for a Special Enrollment Period:

- Your COBRA coverage or retiree coverage ends. If you miss your 8-month window when you stopped working, you'll have to wait until the next General Enrollment Period 1/1-3/31 to sign up.
- You have or lose your Marketplace coverage.
- You have End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). [Learn more about Medicare coverage for ESRD.](#)

## Between January 1-March 31 each year (General Enrollment Period)

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You can sign up between January 1-March 31 each year. This is called the General Enrollment Period. Your coverage starts July 1. You might pay a monthly late enrollment penalty, if you don't qualify for a Special Enrollment Period.

[Get details about the late enrollment penalties.](#)

[What does Medicare cost? | Medicare](#)

# What does Medicare cost?

Generally, you pay a monthly premium for Medicare coverage and part of the costs each time you get a covered service. There's **no yearly limit on what you pay out-of-pocket, unless you have supplemental coverage, like a Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) policy, or you join a Medicare Advantage Plan.**

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## Costs for Part A (Hospital Insurance)

Part A costs:	What you pay in 2021:
<b>Premium</b>	<p><b>\$0 for most people</b> (because they paid Medicare taxes long enough while working - generally at least 10 years). This is sometimes called "premium-free Part A." <a href="#">Do I qualify?</a> ⓘ</p> <p>If you don't qualify for a premium-free Part A, you might be able to buy it. In 2021, the premium is either \$259 or \$471 each month (\$274 or \$499 each month in 2022), depending on how long you or your spouse worked and paid Medicare taxes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You also have to sign up for Part B to buy Part A.</li> <li>If you don't buy Part A when you're first eligible for Medicare (usually when you turn 65), you might pay a penalty. <a href="#">How much is the Part A penalty?</a> ⓘ</li> </ul>
<b>Deductible</b>	<p><b>\$1,484</b> (\$1,556 in 2022) for each time you're admitted to the hospital per <u>benefit period</u>, before <u>Original Medicare</u> starts to pay. There's no limit to the number of benefit periods you can have.</p>
<b>Inpatient stays (copayments)</b>	<p>Days 1-60: \$0 after you pay your Part A deductible            Days 61-90: \$371 each day (\$389 in 2022)            Days 91-150: \$742 each day while using your 60 lifetime reserve days (\$778 in 2022)            After day 150: You pay all costs</p>



## Costs for Part B (Medical Insurance)

Part B costs:	What you pay 2021:
<b>Premium</b>	<p><b>\$148.50 each month</b> (\$170.10 in 2022) (or higher depending on your income). The amount can change each year. You'll pay the premium each month, even if you don't get any Part B-covered services.</p> <p><a href="#">Who pays a higher premium because of income?</a> ⓘ  <a href="#">How do I pay my Part B premiums?</a> ⓘ</p> <p>You might pay a penalty if you don't sign up for Part B when you're first eligible for Medicare (usually when you turn 65). <a href="#">Check when I should sign up for Part B.</a></p> <p><b>How much is the Part B late enrollment penalty?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You'll pay an extra 10% for each year you could have signed up for Part B, but didn't.</li> <li>This penalty is added to your monthly Part B premium. (You may also pay a higher premium depending on your income.)</li> <li>It's not a one-time late fee - you'll pay the penalty for as long as you have Part B.</li> <li>Generally, you <b>won't</b> have to pay a penalty if you qualify for a <u>Special Enrollment Period</u>. To qualify, you (or your spouse) must still be working and you must have health coverage based on that job.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Example of the Part B penalty.</a> ⓘ</p>
<b>Deductible</b>	<p><b>You'll pay \$203 (\$233 in 2022), before Original Medicare starts to pay.</b> You pay this deductible once each year.</p>
<b>Costs for services (coinsurance)</b>	<p>You'll usually pay 20% of the cost for each Medicare-covered service or item after you've paid your deductible.</p>

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## Costs for plans & supplemental coverage



### Drug coverage (Part D):

Part D costs:	What you pay:
<b>Premium</b>	<p>Monthly premiums vary based on which plan you join. The amount can change each year. You may also have to pay an extra amount each month based on your income.</p> <p><a href="#">Who pays an extra amount because of income?</a> ⓘ</p> <p>You might pay a penalty if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't join a Medicare drug plan when you first get Medicare, <b>and</b></li><li>• Go 63 days or more without <u>creditable drug coverage</u> (coverage that's similar in value to Part D).</li></ul> <p><b>How much is the Part D penalty?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You'll pay an extra 1% for each month (that's 12% a year) you could have signed up for Part D, but didn't.</li><li>• The penalty is added to your monthly premium.</li><li>• It's not a one-time late fee – you'll pay the penalty each month for as long as you have Part D coverage (even if you change plans).</li><li>• If you have <u>creditable drug coverage</u> or if you qualify for <u>Extra Help</u>, you <b>won't</b> have to pay a penalty.</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Example of the Part D penalty.</a> ⓘ</p>
<b>When you get prescription drugs</b>	<p>Most plans charge a deductible, an amount you pay before the plan starts to pay, for prescriptions you fill. The deductible amount varies based on which plan you join.</p> <p>Your actual costs vary depending on the medicines you take, if they are on your plan's list of covered drugs, and which pharmacy you use.</p>

## Medicare Advantage Plan (Part C):

- Monthly premiums vary based on which plan you join. The amount can change each year.
- You must keep paying your Part B premium to stay in your plan.
- Deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments vary based on which plan you join.
- Plans also have a yearly limit on what you pay out-of-pocket. Once you pay the plan's limit, the plan pays 100% for covered health services for the rest of the year.

## Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap):

- Monthly premiums vary based on which policy you buy, where you live, and other factors. The amount can change each year.
- You must keep paying your Part B premium to keep your supplement insurance.
- Helps lower your share of costs for Part A and Part B services in Original Medicare.
- Some Medigap policies include extra benefits to lower your costs, like coverage when you travel out of the country.



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Clients considering Plan N should check with your providers to verify if they accept Medicare assignment. If so, they likely won't have out-of-pocket costs for Part B excess charges. You can help find physicians who accept Medicare assignment on [medicare.gov/physiciancompare](https://www.medicare.gov/physiciancompare).