

MAKING SENSE OF MEDICARE

Frequently Asked Questions

I'm turning 65 soon, but don't plan to retire for a while. Do I need to sign up for Medicare?

We recommend you **sign up for Medicare Part A during your initial enrollment period**. As long as you've worked at least 10 years, there is no premium for Medicare Part A. You can delay signing up for Medicare Part B and the other Medicare programs without paying the late enrollment penalty, as long as:

- You continue to be covered by a medical plan as a working employee (or the spouse of a working employee). Coverage through COBRA or Silver Passport is NOT considered coverage as a working employee.
- You enroll in Medicare B within 8 months of losing coverage as a working employee (during your **special enrollment period**).
- You enroll in Medicare Part D within 60 days of losing coverage as a working employee.
- You enroll in a Medigap Plan within 6 months of enrolling in Medicare Part B.

Enrollment periods are detailed on the back of this flyer.

How do I sign up for Medicare?

Applying for Medicare is convenient, quick and easy. Online enrollment takes less than 10 minutes! Simply visit [SocialSecurity.gov](https://www.SocialSecurity.gov) and click on Apply for Medicare. For Spanish, click Español at the top of the page. The website will guide you through a process of entering information about yourself (name, Social Security Number, birthdate, etc.).

If you're applying for both Social Security and Medicare, it may take a little longer — 10 to 30 minutes depending on your situation. You can save your application as you go if you need to take a break or get interrupted.

Once you're done, the Social Security Administration will contact you with updates or questions. You can use Medicare's online Application Status feature to check on the status of your completed application at any time.

Can I drop my Cedars-Sinai coverage when I enroll in Medicare?

Yes. Anyone can drop medical coverage during Cedars-Sinai open enrollment or after a qualifying life event — and enrolling in Medicare is a qualifying life event. You have 30 days from enrolling in Medicare to drop Cedars-Sinai medical coverage. (Remember, if you miss the 30-day deadline, you must wait until the next open enrollment to drop your Cedars-Sinai coverage.)

Can I be covered as a Cedars-Sinai employee and Medicare at the same time?

Yes. But keep in mind:

- You'll continue to pay your share of the premium for your Cedars-Sinai medical plan
- In addition, you'll pay monthly premiums if you're enrolled in Medicare Part B, Medicare D or a Medigap plan — even if you don't use the benefits.

When covered by both, the Cedars-Sinai plan is considered primary, which means it pays your healthcare bills first. Medicare is secondary. If both plans cover up to their limits and there are still remaining costs, you pay whatever remains.

MEDICARE PROGRAMS

Part A	Hospital Insurance	Part A + Part B = Original Medicare
Part B	Medical Coverage	
Part D	Prescription Drug Coverage	
Medigap	Medicare supplement insurance policies (which supplement Original Medicare)	
OR		
Part C	Medicare Advantage (MA) plans (an alternative to Medicare Part A + Part B + Medigap) Often, but not always, MA plans cover prescription drugs (if yours does, you won't need a separate Medicare Part D plan)	

I plan to retire before I'm 65; can I sign up for Medicare early?

You must be at least 65 to be covered by Medicare (unless you have end stage renal disease). For coverage between the time you retire and when you turn 65, you may be able to purchase medical coverage through one of the following programs:

- COBRA offers continuation of your Cedars-Sinai medical coverage on a self-pay basis for up to 18 months
- Silver Passport provides employees with 20+ years at Cedars-Sinai continued Cedars-Sinai medical coverage on a self-pay basis until the month before turning 65
- State healthcare exchange, like CoveredCalifornia ([CoveredCA.com](https://www.coveredca.com)).

Even though I'm planning to retire at 65, can I continue my coverage through COBRA for 18 months and then sign up for Medicare?

Technically yes, but it might cost you more money in the long run. COBRA is not considered coverage based on current employment (for Medicare Part B) and therefore does not qualify you for the **special enrollment period**. This means if you don't enroll during your **initial enrollment period**, most likely you will pay higher Medicare Part B plan premiums for life.

If I miss the initial and special enrollment periods, can I still enroll in Medicare?

Yes, you can enroll during general enrollment:

Medicare Parts A and B or Part C — Each year from Jan. 1 to March 31 for coverage starting July 1

Medicare Part D drug plan — Each year between Oct. 15 and Dec. 7 for coverage starting Jan. 1

Keep in mind:

- You will have to pay higher premiums
- The longer you go without coverage, the higher your premiums will be.

How much is the late enrollment penalty?

The penalty varies by plan:

- **Medicare Part B** — 10% per year for every 12-month period you sign up after age 65 or after losing coverage as a working employee
- **Medicare Part D** — At least 1% per month for every month after age 65 or after losing coverage as a working employee (or COBRA).

PENALTY-FREE MEDICARE ENROLLMENT PERIODS

Automatic Enrollment

If you started receiving Social Security retirement benefits before 65, you will automatically be enrolled in Part A and Part B (with the option to decline Part B) with no penalty. You will receive a Medicare information packet 3 months before your 65th birthday.

Initial Enrollment Period

If you are turning 65, you can enroll without penalty during the 7 month period that begins 3 months before the month you turn 65, includes the month you turn 65, and ends 3 months after the month you turn 65.

You will not automatically get a Medicare information packet; you must contact Social Security to request it and sign up.

Special Enrollment Period

You do not need to enroll in Medicare at 65 if you or your spouse/domestic partner are working and you are enrolled for employer-sponsored coverage (this does not include COBRA, Silver Passport or retiree coverage).

Once employer-sponsored coverage ends, to avoid late penalties you have:

- 8 months to enroll in Parts A and B or C
- 60 days to enroll in Part D.

Medigap Open Enrollment Period

To avoid late penalties, you have a 6-month period starting the day you enroll in Medicare B to enroll in any Medigap policy sold in your state, even if you have health problems, for the same price as people with good health; some states may have additional open enrollment rights under state law.

If you apply later, there is no guarantee an insurance company will sell you a Medigap policy if you don't meet their medical underwriting requirements.