

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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MEDICARE NEWS

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**2010 OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG
AND HEALTH PLAN COVERAGE BEGINS NOVEMBER 15TH**
CMS Encourages Beneficiaries to Review Coverage

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is encouraging Medicare beneficiaries to take advantage of the annual Open Enrollment period to make sure they have the best coverage available to meet their healthcare needs in 2010.

The Open Enrollment period begins on November 15th and runs through December 31st. It's the one time every year when all people with Medicare can review and, if necessary, change their current health care coverage.

"Medicare beneficiaries will continue to have a wide range of health and drug plan options in 2010, including Original Medicare," said Jonathan Blum, director of the Center for Medicare Management and the acting director of the Center for Drug and Health Plan Choice. "Open Enrollment is the time for those with Medicare to double-check that they have the best coverage for their individual needs. They may find that they like what they have, or may find a coverage option that better fits their needs."

Beginning on November 15th, beneficiaries can go to **www.medicare.gov** or call **1-800-MEDICARE** (1-800-633-4227) to make changes in their Medicare prescription drug and health coverage. People in Original Medicare without prescription drug coverage can enroll in a drug plan or health plan that offers drug coverage during Open Enrollment.

Just as always, it is important for people with Medicare to review their coverage during Open Enrollment. Since coverage varies by plan, CMS recommends that those with Medicare use Open Enrollment to think about how their health may have changed, and what their needs will be for the coming year.

Resources for Medicare Beneficiaries

There are a number of easy ways that beneficiaries can get information and assistance about what plan is best for their needs. These include:

- Calling Medicare at **1-800-MEDICARE** (1-800-633-4227) (TTY#: 1-877-486-2048) or visiting **www.medicare.gov** to review plans to see how the costs and coverage compares for different coverage options available in their area. Medicare customer service representatives are available 24-hours a day/7 days a week with multiple language options and resources for people with disabilities.
- Reviewing CMS' *Medicare and You* handbook. The handbook was mailed to all Medicare beneficiaries in October and provides a listing of available prescription drug and health coverage plans in their areas. All people with Medicare should also have received information from their current health and prescriptions drug plans. This handbook is also conveniently available online at www.medicare.gov
- Meeting one-on-one with a trained Medicare specialist. To find a Medicare specialist in their area, seniors should call 1-800-633-4227 (1-800-MEDICARE) or visit www.medicare.gov.
- Medicare beneficiaries who cannot meet the costs of prescription drugs may be eligible for extra help. Medicare has a program in which those who are eligible for extra help pay no more than \$2.50 for each generic drug and no more than \$6.30 for each name brand drug. The program can also help pay for premiums and other out-of-pocket costs. Call 1-800-772-1213 or visit www.socialsecurity.gov to find out more about getting extra help.

At www.medicare.gov, beneficiaries and those assisting them can access interactive tools that will help them learn more about all of the prescription drug plans and health plans – including Original Medicare – that serve their area. In addition to providing overviews of coverage and premium costs, there is also information about the quality and performance ratings of participating plans.

Protecting Against Fraud and Identity Theft

CMS also offers tips to help beneficiaries protect themselves against fraud and identity theft during the Open Enrollment period. Medicare recommends that people treat their Medicare number as they do their social security number and credit card information. Beneficiaries should not give personal information to anyone who comes to their home uninvited or makes an unsolicited phone call selling Medicare-related products or services. Beneficiaries who believe they are a victim of fraud or identity theft should contact 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477)/ (TDY#:1-800-377-4950) to report the incident. More information is available at www.stopmedicarefraud.gov

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