

Medicare Overview

Medicare is a federal health insurance program primarily for people aged sixty-five (65) and older. It also covers certain younger individuals with disabilities and those with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) or Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). Medicare has multiple parts, each covering specific services.

Here is an overview of Medicare and the differences between its parts:

Overview

1. Part A (Hospital insurance):

- **Coverage:** Inpatient hospital stays, care in a skilled nursing facility, hospice care, and some home health services.
- **Cost:** Most people do not pay a premium for Part A if they or their spouse paid Medicare taxes while working. However, there are deductibles and coinsurance.

2. Part B (Medical insurance):

- **Coverage:** Outpatient care, doctor's services, preventive services, and some home health care. It also covers medically necessary services and supplies needed to diagnose or treat a medical condition.
- **Cost:** Part B has a monthly premium, an annual deductible and typically a 20% coinsurance for most services after the deductible has been met.

3. Part C (Medicare Advantage):

- **Coverage:** Advantage Plans are an alternative to Original Medicare (Parts A and B). These are offered by private insurance companies approved by Medicare and often include Part D (prescription drug coverage). They may also offer additional benefits like vision, dental, and hearing services.
- **Cost:** Vary by plan but may include a monthly premium, copayments, deductibles, and coinsurance. Please note that these costs may differ from deductibles, coinsurance, and copays within Medicare A & B.

4. Part D (Prescription drug coverage):

- **Coverage:** Part D is prescription drug coverage and is available through Medicare-approved private insurers.
- **Cost:** Plans have a monthly premium, annual deductible, and varying copayments or coinsurance. The costs and specific drugs covered vary by plan.

Differences between Medicare Plans

Understanding the coverage, costs, administration, and how the plans offered differ and/or complement one another will help to ensure you choose the appropriate coverage for your needs and financial situation:

1. Services covered:

- **Part A:** Inpatient care and related services.
- **Part B:** Outpatient services, preventive care, and necessary medical supplies.
- **Part C:** Combines Parts A and B and often Part D into a single plan offered by private insurers with additional benefits.
- **Part D:** Prescription drugs.

2. Cost:

- **Part A:** Premium-free for most, but with deductibles and coinsurance.
- **Part B:** Monthly premiums, annual deductible, and typically 20% coinsurance.
- **Part C:** Costs vary widely by plan, including premiums, deductibles, and copayments/coinsurance, and some have out-of-pocket maximums.
- **Part D:** Monthly premiums, deductibles, and varying copayments/coinsurance, with formularies determining drug coverage.

3. Administration:

- **Parts A and B (Original Medicare):** Administered by the federal government.
- **Parts C and D:** Administered by Medicare-approved private insurance companies.

Enrollment periods

- **Initial enrollment period:** A seven-month (7) period that starts three months before the month you turn sixty-five (65), includes your birth month, and ends three months after.
- **General enrollment period:** January 1 to March 31 each year, for those who missed their IEP. Coverage starts July 1.
- **Special enrollment period:** Available in certain circumstances. For example, as if you have employer coverage when you turn sixty-five (65) and want to delay enrollment in Part B, you can do so without penalty.
- **Annual enrollment period:** October 15 to December 7 every year when you can switch between Advantage and Original Medicare or change Part D plans.
- **Medicare Advantage open enrollment period:** January 1 to March 31 every year, allowing changes in Advantage plans or a switch to Original Medicare.

Medicare provides essential health coverage to millions of Americans, offering assorted options to meet the diverse needs of its beneficiaries. Understanding eligibility requirements and your cost-sharing arrangements is crucial for individuals enrolling in Medicare.

For more details

Visit [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov) or [the Social Security Administration's Medicare page](#).