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Medicare Open Enrollment for 2021 Begins October 15



The annual Medicare Open Enrollment Period is the time during which Medicare beneficiaries can make new choices and pick plans that work best for them. Each year, Medicare plan costs and coverage typically change. In addition, your health-care needs may have changed over the past year. The Open Enrollment Period — which begins on October 15 and runs through December 7 — is your opportunity to switch Medicare health and prescription drug plans to better suit your needs.

During this period, you can:

- Join a Medicare prescription drug plan (Part D)
- Switch from one Part D plan to another Part D plan
- Drop your Part D coverage altogether
- Switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan
- Switch from a Medicare Advantage plan to Original Medicare
- Change from one Medicare Advantage plan to a different Medicare Advantage plan
- Change from a Medicare Advantage plan that offers prescription drug coverage to a Medicare Advantage plan that doesn't offer prescription drug coverage
- Switch from a Medicare Advantage plan that doesn't offer prescription drug coverage to a Medicare Advantage plan that does offer prescription drug coverage

Any changes made during Open Enrollment are effective as of January 1, 2021.

Review plan options

Now is a good time to review your current Medicare plan to see if it's still right for you. Have you been satisfied with the coverage and level of care you're receiving with your current plan? Are your premium costs or out-of-pocket expenses too high? Has your health changed? Do you anticipate needing medical care or treatment, or new or pricier prescription drugs?

If your current plan doesn't meet your health-care needs or fit within your budget, you can switch to a new plan. If you find that you're satisfied with your current Medicare plan and it's still being offered, you don't have to do anything. The coverage you have will continue.

Medicare Part B (hospital insurance) premium and deductible costs capped for 2021

A provision of the short-term government spending bill recently passed by Congress and signed by President Trump limits potential Medicare Part B premium and deductible increases to 25% of what they would otherwise be. In April, the Medicare Trustees projected a 6% increase in the standard Medicare Part B premium, but stated that this projection was uncertain. Most Medicare costs for the following year are typically announced in late October or early November, so actual Medicare Part B costs for 2021 will not be available until then.

New and expanded benefits for 2021

Expansion of telehealth services. Medicare Advantage plans may now cover a wider range of telehealth and other virtual services, including virtual check-ins and E-visits that allow you to talk with your doctor or

Where can you get more information?

Determining what coverage you have now and comparing it to other Medicare plans can be confusing and complicated. Pay attention to notices you receive from Medicare and from your plan, and take advantage of available help. You can call 1-800-MEDICARE or visit the Medicare website, [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov), to use the Plan Finder and other tools that can make comparing plans easier.

You can also call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for free, personalized counseling at no cost to you. Visit shiptacenter.org or call the toll-free Medicare number to find the phone number for your state.

other health-care providers using an online patient portal.

Medicare Advantage for beneficiaries with End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). Medicare-eligible individuals with ESRD are eligible to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan during Open Enrollment. Plan coverage will start January 1, 2021.

Acupuncture coverage for back pain. Medicare now covers up to 12 acupuncture visits in 90 days for chronic low back pain.

Lower out-of-pocket costs for insulin. You may be able to join a drug plan that offers supplemental benefits for insulin (Part D Senior Savings Model). The copay for a 30-day supply of insulin will be \$35 or less. Coverage will begin on January 1, 2021.

You can find more information on new and expanded benefits in the *Medicare & You 2021 Handbook* on [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov).

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