

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage (Part D)

Medicare offers prescription drug coverage (Part D) to everyone with Medicare. To get Medicare drug coverage, you must join a plan run by an insurance company or other private company approved by Medicare. Each plan can vary in cost and drugs covered.

There are two ways to get Medicare prescription drug coverage:

1. **Medicare Prescription Drug Plans.** These plans (sometimes called “PDPs”) add drug coverage to Original Medicare, some Medicare Cost Plans, some Medicare Private Fee-for-Service (PFFS) Plans, and Medicare Medical Savings Account (MSA) Plans.
2. **Medicare Advantage Plans (like an HMO or PPO) or other Medicare health plans that offer Medicare prescription drug coverage.** You get all of your Part A and Part B coverage, and prescription drug coverage (Part D), through these plans. Medicare Advantage Plans with prescription drug coverage are sometimes called “MA-PDs.”

Both types of plans are called “Medicare drug plans” in this section.

Why Join a Medicare Drug Plan?

Even if you don’t take a lot of prescription drugs now, you should still consider joining a Medicare drug plan. See page 43 for a list of things to consider when choosing a plan. If you decide not to join a Medicare drug plan when you are first eligible, and you don’t have other **creditable prescription drug coverage** (also called creditable coverage), you will likely pay a late enrollment penalty (higher **premiums**) if you join later. See page 67 for more information on creditable coverage and the late enrollment penalty.

Note: Discount cards, doctor samples, free clinics, drug discount Web sites, and manufacturer’s pharmacy assistance programs aren’t considered prescription drug coverage and aren’t creditable coverage.



If you have limited income and resources, you may qualify for **Extra Help** from Medicare to pay for prescription drug coverage. You may also be able to get help from your state. See pages 78–84.

Blue words in the text are defined on pages 115–118.