Turning 65? Your Medicare Checklist

A Simple Guide to Help You Avoid Costly Mistakes

By Randy Dillard

If you're getting close to your 65th birthday, congratulations! You're entering a new chapter of life.

For many people, however, turning 65 also brings a lot of questions...

- When do I sign up?
- Do I have to take Medicare?
- What if I'm still working?
- Will Medicare cover everything?
- Do I need a supplement?
- How much is this going to cost?

The good news is that Medicare doesn't have to be complicated.

Here's a simple checklist to help you stay on track.

▯ 1. Know When Your Medicare Enrollment Window Opens

Your Initial Enrollment Period lasts **7 months**.

- 3 months before your 65th birthday
- The month you turn 65
- 3 months after

Missing certain enrollment deadlines may result in delayed coverage or, depending on your circumstances, late enrollment penalties.

Tip: Don't wait until the last minute to understand your options.

▯ 2. Are You Still Working?

This is one of the biggest questions.

If you have employer health insurance, your Medicare decisions may be different than someone who is already retired.

Questions to ask:

- Is your employer coverage considered creditable?
- Is your employer large enough for Medicare to remain secondary?
- Should you enroll in Part B now—or later?

The answer depends on your individual situation.

▯ 3. Learn the Parts of Medicare

You don't need to memorize everything.

Here's the simple version.

Medicare Part	What It Generally Covers
Part A	Hospital care
Part B	Doctor visits and outpatient medical services
Part D	Prescription drugs

Medicare Part	What It Generally Covers
Medicare Supplement	Helps pay certain out-of-pocket costs Original Medicare doesn't cover
Medicare Advantage	An alternative way to receive Medicare-covered benefits through private plans approved by Medicare

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4. Understand That Medicare Doesn't Cover Everything

Many people are surprised to learn that Original Medicare generally doesn't pay all healthcare expenses.

Depending on your needs, you may want to explore options that help cover expenses such as deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, or prescription drugs.

Everyone's situation is different.

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5. Make Sure Your Doctors Accept Your Coverage

Before choosing any plan, ask:

- Can I keep my current doctors?
- Are my prescriptions covered?
- Are my preferred hospitals included?

A little homework now can help avoid frustration later.

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6. Think Beyond Today

Healthcare needs change over time.

While none of us can predict the future, it's worth thinking about questions like:

- What happens if my health changes?
- Could I need long-term care someday?
- How can I protect my retirement savings from unexpected healthcare expenses?

Planning ahead may provide more choices later.

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7. Review Your Coverage Every Year

Medicare isn't something you choose once and forget.

Prescription drug plans, provider networks, premiums, and benefits can change from year to year.

Reviewing your coverage annually can help ensure it still fits your needs.

Medicare Checklist

✔ Know your enrollment deadline

✔ Understand whether you need Part B

✔ Learn the difference between Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage

✔ Review prescription drug coverage

✔ Check your doctors and hospitals

✔ Think about future healthcare needs

✔ Review your coverage each year

One Last Thought

I've been helping people with Medicare for many years, and I've noticed something interesting.

Very few people regret taking the time to understand their choices.

Many do regret making a rushed decision—or putting it off until the last minute.

My goal isn't to tell you what plan to choose. It's to help you understand your options so you can make an informed decision that's right for you.

If you have questions, let's have a conversation. A short, no-pressure discussion can often answer questions that seem much more complicated than they really are.

Let's Chat.