

K-State Research and Extension News for October, 2021

Medicare Open Enrollment is Here!

Submitted by Kathy Goul, Family & Consumer Science Agent

Medicare Open Enrollment time is here! October 15th through December 7th, Medicare beneficiaries can review their plan coverage to make certain they are getting the most bang for their buck. Plans are allowed to change their cost and coverage rules each fall, so it is important to read the Annual Notice of Change received each year from your plan to see if there are any changes that affect you. Medicare beneficiaries may compare plans and make changes in their drug plan (Part D) or Medicare Advantage plan during this open enrollment period. Those changes will take effect on January 1, 2022.

Plan changes may affect your monthly premium, deductible, out of pocket maximum, drug co-pays and your pharmacy, doctor or hospital choices. It is important that you review your plan options each year during this open enrollment period. Even if your prescriptions have not changed this past year, it is always a good idea to compare plans. Your current plan may no longer cover a medication, or may cover it at a higher or lower cost compared to other plans available. Reviewing your plan may, in fact, save you money in 2022.

To review your current coverage and compare plans for the coming year, individuals can visit [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) and use the plan finder. This tool walks you through the steps of comparing your current plan to the plans available for next year. To use the plan finder you must create a MyMedicare.gov account. When setting up your account you will be asked to create a username and password. Other information needed to set up this account is your Medicare number, last name, date of birth, current address with zip code or city and your Medicare Part A and B coverage start dates. Your Medicare number and coverage start dates can be found on your red, white and blue Medicare card. Once your account is set up, you can visit the Medicare Plan Finder on [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) to compare your plan to others available in 2022.

K-State Research & Extension provides free, unbiased assistance to help with your plan comparisons through a partnership with the state Senior Health Insurance Counseling for Kansas (SHICK) program. Individuals seeking help with plan comparisons can pick up an intake form at our Paola office, located at 913 N. Pearl Street, Suite #1, or our Mound City office, located at 115 S. 6th Street. The intake form can also be found on our website at www.maraisdescygnnes.k-state.edu. Once this form is completed and returned to the office, we will contact you to help you with your plan comparison. In order for us to assist you, we will need you to provide us with your Medicare information, including your MyMedicare.gov account.

Due to COVID-19, we have made adjustments in how we will assist individuals this year to ensure the safety of our clients, volunteers and staff. Assistance will be provided over the phone, via email or video conferencing, or in-person as needed.

Medicare prescription drug coverage is an optional benefit offered to everyone who has Medicare. If you decide not to get drug coverage when you are first eligible for benefits, you

will likely pay a late enrollment penalty if you join later. You will pay this penalty for as long as you have Medicare prescription drug coverage. Exceptions to this rule include if you have other credible drug coverage (such as through an employer plan), or you receive extra help with your Medicare prescription drug plan.

If you are not currently taking any prescription drugs, we encourage you to consider enrolling in the least expensive Medicare prescription drug plan. Your health needs can change throughout the year. This provides you with coverage, if needed, and helps you avoid late enrollment penalties.

For more information about open enrollment and how we can help, visit our website at www.maraisdescygn.es.k-state.edu. Look for the link in our Hot Topics section for Medicare Open Enrollment. I can also be reached by email at kgoul@ksu.edu.

Source: Medicare.gov For more information on family resource management or adult development and aging contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Paola (913-294-4306) or Mound City (913-795-2829) offices, or write to kgoul@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescygn.es.k-state.edu.