

Call, Enroll and Save With a Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Card

Tommy G. Thompson, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, answers a reader's question about Medicare.

Q. How is Medicare helping me save on my prescription drug costs?

A. President Bush and Congress worked together to pass the Medicare Modernization Act. Under this law, Medicare for the first time is providing substantial help to seniors who for too long were forced to pay for prescription drugs out of their own pocket.

The full benefit takes effect on January 1, 2006, and will cut seniors' prescription drug costs in half, on average. Until then, however, Medicare is offering immediate help to seniors in the form of Medicare-approved drug discount cards.

Millions of seniors already are saving on brand-name drugs, and even more on generic drugs, using the drug discount cards. This is an especially good deal for low-income seniors who are receiving \$600 in additional assistance in both 2004 and 2005 using the cards – for a total of \$1,200.

While seniors across America are saving money every day on prescription drugs, we want even more seniors – especially low-income seniors – to get in on the savings. This \$1,200 is real savings for seniors who most need the help. And these seniors can't afford to leave this money sitting on the table.

Medicare is eager to help you sign up for the prescription drug discount card that best meets your needs. Just have your medicines and doses, your total monthly income and your ZIP code and call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) where we will help you save money on your prescription drug costs. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048 and ask about "drug cards." If you want, we'll send you an enrollment kit that has your top five choices and an enrollment application.

Once you select a Medicare-approved drug discount card, you will fill out and send in the enrollment form to the card sponsor, who will send you the card in the mail. You will then begin saving money on your prescription drugs until the full Medicare benefit takes effect January 1, 2006.

This information also is available on the Web at www.medicare.gov, where you should select "Prescription Drug and Other Assistance Programs."