

Benefits Planner: Retirement

Applying for Medicare Only

If you are within three months of age 65 or older and not ready to start your monthly Social Security benefits yet, you can use our online retirement application to sign up just for Medicare and wait to apply for your retirement or spouses benefits later.

Before you decide, you need to be sure that you understand how waiting until later will affect:

- the lifetime benefits we can pay on your account and
- your health insurance coverage.

If you have a Health Savings Account (HSA) or health insurance based on current employment, you may want to ask your personnel office or insurance company how signing up for Medicare will affect you.

Lifetime Benefits We Can Pay On Your Record

You can start your retirement benefit at any point from age 62 up until age 70. Your benefit amount will be higher the longer you delay starting it. This adjustment is usually permanent. If you:

- Apply for benefits before full retirement age, your benefits will be reduced because you are taking them earlier. (Full retirement age is 66 for people born between 1943 and 1954.

Beginning with 1955, two months are added for every birth year until the full retirement age reaches 67 for people born in 1960 or later.)

If your full retirement age is 66 and you decide to start your retirement benefits at age 65, your benefit will be 93.33 percent of your full benefit amount.

- Delay receiving retirement benefits until **after** you reach full retirement age (any month up to age 70), you can increase your benefit by accumulating Delayed Retirement Credits. If your full retirement age is 66 and 2 months and you wait until age 70, your benefit will be 130.67 percent of your full retirement age benefit.
- Have family members who qualify for benefits, a delay means you would lose some of the

benefits they might have received. However, delaying benefits also increases the maximum monthly survivors benefit your spouse may receive.

If You Plan To Continue Working

Even if you plan to continue working, you may still be able to receive some benefits. If you are under full retirement age and you earn over a certain amount, we will deduct the excess earnings from your benefits.

If you delay receiving benefits until the month you reach full retirement age, you may receive your benefits with no limit on your earnings.

For more information that will help you decide the best time to start benefits, please read [Other Things To Consider](#).

Your Health Insurance Coverage

Medicare is our country's health insurance program for people age 65 or older. The program helps with the cost of health care, but it does not cover all medical expenses or the cost of most long-term care.

- **Hospital insurance (Part A)** helps pay for inpatient care in a hospital or skilled nursing facility (following a hospital stay), some home health care, and hospice care.

Most people age 65 or older are eligible for free Medicare hospital insurance (Part A) if they have worked and paid Medicare taxes long enough. You should sign up for Medicare hospital insurance (Part A) 3 months before your 65th birthday, whether or not you want to begin receiving retirement benefits.

- **Medical insurance (Part B)** helps pay for doctors' services and many other medical ser

Anyone who is eligible for free Medicare hospital insurance (Part A) can enroll in Medicare medical insurance (Part B) by paying a monthly premium. Some beneficiaries with higher incomes will pay a higher monthly Part B premium. To find out the premium amount you pay, read "[Medicare Premiums: Rules For Higher-Income Beneficiaries](#)".

Should I Sign Up For Medical Insurance (Part B)?

When you sign up for Medicare, you will be asked if you want to enroll in Medical insurance (Part B).

If you do not choose to enroll in Medicare Part B and then decide to do so later, your coverage may be delayed and you may have to pay a higher monthly premium unless you qualify for a "Special Enrollment Period," or SEP.

Special Enrollment Period (SEP)

If you are age 65 or older **and** your medical insurance coverage is under a group health plan based on your, or your spouse's, **current employment**, you may not need to apply for Medicare supplementary medical insurance (Part B) at age 65. You may qualify for a SEP that will let you sign up for Part B during:

- Any month you remain covered under the group health plan **and** your, or your spouse's, employment continues; **or**
- The 8-month period that begins with the month after your group health plan coverage or the employment it is based on ends, whichever comes first.

Exception: If your group health plan coverage or the employment it is based on ends during your initial enrollment period for Medicare Part B, you do not qualify for a SEP.

Your initial enrollment period starts three months before the month you attain age 65 and ends three months after the month you turn 65.

If you want to know more about enrollment periods for Part B, please read the information about general and SEP in our "Medicare" booklet **or** talk to your personnel office before you decide.

If you already have Medicare Part A and wish to sign up for Medicare Part B, **you cannot sign up online**. Please call us at **1-800-772-1213** (If you are deaf or hard of hearing, please call our TTY number at **1-800-325-0778**.) or call your local Social Security office to sign up for Medicare Part B only.