

Covered by Medicare?

You'll want to consider the new Prescription Drug Plan

by karin meyer

If you're age 65 and older or are younger than 65 and have certain disabilities, you're likely covered by Medicare, the government's health insurance program.

In 2006, Medicare is offering a Prescription Drug Plan, which is insurance provided by private companies that have been approved by Medicare. Enrollment begins Nov. 15, 2005, and closes May 15,

2006. This plan is different from the temporary discount cards that were available in 2004 and 2005. Even if you did not qualify for the \$600 credit previously, you may still qualify for extra assistance with the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. Read the 5 W's below for details about applying for the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan. For common Questions & Answers, see Page 7.



who ▶

Enrollment in the Prescription Drug Plan is voluntary, but you must enroll to get coverage. Who should consider enrolling:

- People with Medicare AND no prescription drug coverage.
- People with Medicare AND private prescription drug coverage. You will need to weigh your plan's benefits/costs against the Medicare plans offered.
- People with Medicare AND Medicaid (While prescription coverage is automatic, enrolling lets you choose a drug plan rather than be assigned one.)

what ▶

Several Prescription Drug Plans will be offered

Details about specific plans are expected in mid-October. See sample at right for an idea of how a plan might work.

- The *Medicare & You 2006* handbook, outlining the prescription drug plans available, will be mailed in October to people with Medicare. Around Oct. 13, you can begin comparing drug plans by calling (800) MEDICARE, visiting www.medicare.gov or seeking help from local advocates (listed under "where" below).
- You may qualify for extra help if your income is less than \$14,364 for an individual or \$19,248 for a married couple living together. Call the Health District's Prescription Assistance program now for help in determining if you qualify: 472-0444. (For details, see Q&A on Page 7)

Sample Drug Plan

Keep in mind, this is only a sample of cost and coverage:

- \$37 Monthly Premium
- \$250 Deductible (Your out-of-pocket cost before coverage begins)
- Medicare pays 75% of prescription drug costs up to \$2,250. You pay the remaining 25%.
- You pay 100% of your costs from \$2,250 to \$5,100.
- Medicare pays about 95% of costs above \$5,100.

**More Questions?
See Page 7**

when ▶

October 2005

- Begin comparing Medicare Prescription Drug Plans as soon as they are made available (expected October 2005).

November 15, 2005 – May 15, 2006

- Choose a plan and enroll between Nov. 15, 2005, and May 15, 2006. If you enroll by Dec. 31, 2005, your coverage will begin Jan. 1. If you enroll after Jan. 1, your coverage will begin the month following enrollment.

where ▶

You may already have received forms by mail from Medicare. If not, local residents can get forms and ask questions about how to apply, by calling:

- **Health District, 472-0444**
- **Aspen Club at Poudre Valley Hospital, 495-8558**

why ▶

Enrolling in the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan may save you money on your prescription medications, particularly if you currently have no drug coverage. Failing to apply during the enrollment period that closes May 15, 2006, will result in higher premiums if you decide to enroll after open enrollment ends. ✦