

# Questions & Answers about the Temporary Prescription Drug Discount Card

Provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

## About the New Medicare Law

### **Where can I go for the latest, official information about changes in Medicare?**

For up-to-date information and answers to your questions, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or visit <http://www.medicare.gov> on the web.

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### **Can I get a copy of the new legislation?**

Yes. You can print or view a copy of the new legislation at <http://www.cms.gov/medicarereform/> on the web.

## About the Temporary Prescription Drug Discount Cards

### **What are Prescription Drug Discount Cards in the new legislation?**

These discount cards will be available in 2004 to help you save on prescription drugs. Medicare will contract with private companies to offer new drug discount cards, until a Medicare prescription drug benefit starts in 2006. Companies who sponsor a discount card and meet Medicare's standards will have a "Medicare-approved" seal on their discount card.

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### **When can I get a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card?**

Card sponsors are allowed to start enrolling people with Medicare as early as May 2004. If cards are available and companies are enrolling people in your area, you can join any time after that.

**Does the cost go up if I enroll in a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card after May 2004?**

No. Some companies may not be ready to start enrolling as early as May. There is an annual enrollment fee of no more than \$30. No matter when you join, the enrollment fee is the same. There is no penalty or extra charge for joining at a later date. You can choose to join any time until December 31, 2005, when this program ends. Medicare’s new comprehensive prescription drug benefit begins January 1, 2006.

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**Do I have to join a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card?**

No. The discount cards are voluntary and enrolling is completely your choice. If you don’t choose a discount card or turn in an enrollment form, Medicare won’t enroll you in a card.

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**I already have a prescription drug discount card, but it’s not Medicare approved. How will the new Medicare-approved discount cards work with my card?**

If you already have a discount card that is not Medicare-approved, you don’t have to give up that card. You can still choose a Medicare-approved discount card. You will be able to use both cards. For example, one of the cards might give you a better price on some of your medicines, while the other card gives you the best price on the rest of them. You should compare the different costs of your prescriptions among all of the drug discount cards that are available, to make sure you are making the best choice.

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**How much will I save on my medicines if I join a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card?**

Medicare expects that you might save 10-25% on prescription drugs. Savings will vary and you might not save on every medicine you need.

**Who can get a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card?**

Almost everyone with Medicare can choose to join. It doesn't matter whether you have Original Medicare (Part A and/or Part B), a Medigap policy, a Medicare managed care plan, or another kind of Medicare health plan. The only people who can't enroll in a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card are those who have outpatient drug coverage through Medicaid.

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**I am disabled and have Medicare and Medicaid. Can I get a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card?**

Almost everyone with Medicare can choose to join a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card. However, if you have outpatient drug coverage through Medicaid, you can't enroll.

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**I have Medicare and a Medigap policy. Can I get a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card, and how will it affect my Medigap?**

Yes, you can choose to enroll in a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card even if you have a Medigap policy. You can keep both the discount card and your Medigap policy. The discounts and Medigap coverage will work together, and your Medigap coverage won't be affected.

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**I am in a Medicare managed care plan. Can I get a Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card?**

Yes. Your Medicare managed care plan may offer a prescription drug discount card. If so, you will get your discount card through your plan. In addition, if you qualify for the \$600 credit to help pay for your prescription drugs, you will receive this credit through your Medicare managed care plan.

If your Medicare managed care plan doesn't offer a discount card, you can choose any Medicare-approved discount card offered in your area.

**I've heard that I might be able to get \$600 to help pay for my prescription drugs. How does that work?**

If your income is less than \$12,124 as a single person or less than \$16,363 for a married couple, you might qualify for \$600 to help pay for your prescription drugs. If you qualify, Medicare will put a \$600 credit on your Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card that you can use when you get your prescriptions. You won't have to pay the annual enrollment fee for the discount card if you qualify for the \$600.

To apply for this credit, you need to fill out an enrollment form for a prescription drug discount card and complete the part of the form for the \$600.

You can't qualify for the \$600 if you already have drug coverage from Medicaid, TRICARE for Life or an employer group health plan.

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**If I qualify, can I get \$600 in 2004 and another \$600 in 2005? Does it matter when I enroll?**

In 2004, you can apply for the \$600 anytime. You will get the full \$600 if you qualify, no matter when you apply throughout the year. If you get the \$600 in 2004, you don't have to reapply for help with your prescriptions in 2005. You will get another \$600 for 2005 automatically.

In 2005, if you apply for the \$600 for the first time to help pay for your prescriptions, the company must receive your completed enrollment form in the beginning part of the year. If you apply later, you won't get the full \$600 from Medicare. The chart below shows how much you will get depending on when you join in 2005:

| <b>If you join between</b>    | <b>You will get</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| January 1 – March 31, 2005    | \$600               |
| April 1 – June 30, 2005       | \$450               |
| July 1 – September 30, 2005   | \$300               |
| October 1 – December 31, 2005 | \$150               |

**If I get \$600 in 2004, but I don't use all of it by the end of the year, do I lose it? Can I carry the extra money over and use it in 2005?**

If you keep the same Medicare-approved prescription drug discount card and some of your \$600 is left at the end of 2004, you can use that money in 2005. You don't have to reapply for the \$600 to help pay for your prescriptions in 2005.

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