

# What To Do When Nearing Age 65: Understanding Medicare

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MOVING FROM CEDARS-SINAI HEALTHCARE COVERAGE TO MEDICARE

### I'm turning 65 soon, but don't plan to retire for a while. Do I need to sign up for Medicare?

We recommend you sign up for Medicare Part A during your initial enrollment period. As long as you've worked at least 10 years, there is no premium for Medicare Part A. You can delay signing up for Medicare Part B and the other Medicare programs without paying the late enrollment penalty, as long as:

- You continue to be covered by a medical plan as a working employee (or the spouse of a working employee). Coverage through COBRA or Silver Passport is NOT considered coverage as a working employee.
- You enroll in Medicare B within eight months of losing coverage as a working employee (during your special enrollment period).
- You enroll in Medicare Part D within 60 days of losing coverage as a working employee.
- You enroll in a Medigap Plan within six months of enrolling in Medicare Part B.

### Can I be covered as a Cedars-Sinai employee and Medicare at the same time?

Yes. But keep in mind:

- You'll continue to pay your share of the premium for your Cedars-Sinai medical plan.
- In addition, you'll pay monthly premiums if you're enrolled in Medicare Part B, Medicare D or a Medigap plan—even if you don't use the benefits.
- When covered by both, the Cedars-Sinai plan is considered primary, which means it pays your healthcare bills first. Medicare is secondary. If both plans cover up to their limits and there are still remaining costs, you pay whatever remains.

### Can I drop my Cedars-Sinai coverage when I enroll in Medicare?

Yes. Anyone can drop medical coverage during Cedars-Sinai open enrollment or after a qualifying life event—and enrolling in Medicare is a qualifying life event. You have 30 days from enrolling in Medicare to drop Cedars-Sinai medical coverage. (Remember, if you miss the 30-day deadline, you must wait until the next open enrollment to drop your Cedars-Sinai coverage.)

Learn more about medical coverage options and Medicare in the [What To Do When Leaving Cedars-Sinai brochure](#).

### Medicare Programs

Part A	Hospital insurance	Part A + Part B = <b>Original Medicare</b>
Part B	Medical coverage	
Medigap	<b>Medicare supplement</b> insurance policies supplement, or fill in the gaps, in Original Medicare	
Part D	<b>Medicare Prescription Drug Plans</b>	
OR		
Part C	Part A + Part B + Medicare Supplements + [sometimes Medicare D] = <b>Medicare Advantage</b>  Medicare Advantage (MA) Plans are an alternative to Original Medicare.  Often, but not always, MA Plans cover prescription drugs (if yours does, you won't need a separate Medicare Part D Plan)	

### Even though I'm planning to retire at 65, can I continue my coverage through COBRA for 18 months and then sign up for Medicare?

Technically yes, but it might cost you more money in the long run.

COBRA is not considered coverage based on current employment (for Medicare Part B) and therefore does not qualify you for the special enrollment period. This means if you don't enroll during your initial enrollment period, most likely you will pay higher Medicare Part B plan premiums for life.

### I plan to retire before I'm 65; can I sign up for Medicare early?

You must be at least 65 to be covered by Medicare (unless you have end stage renal disease). For coverage between the time you retire and when you turn 65, you may be able to purchase medical coverage through one of the following programs:

- COBRA offers continuation of your Cedars-Sinai medical coverage on a self-pay basis for up to 18 months.
- Silver Passport provides employees with 20+ years of Cedars-Sinai employment Cedars-Sinai medical coverage on a self-pay basis until the month before turning 65.
- State Healthcare Marketplace for coverage until you are eligible for Medicare. To learn more:
  - California Health Insurance Marketplace: [coveredca.com](https://coveredca.com)
  - To find a link to another state's exchange (or to use the federal marketplace if your state doesn't have an exchange): [healthcare.gov](https://healthcare.gov)

## Medicare Enrollment Periods (Penalty Free)

### Initial Enrollment

When you turn 65, you can enroll during a seven-month period that begins three months before the month you turn 65, includes the month you turn 65, and ends three months after the month you turn 65.



### Special Enrollment

If, during your initial enrollment period, you have medical coverage as a working employee or the spouse of a working employee, you can postpone enrolling in Medicare until your employee coverage ends, then, you have:

- Eight months to enroll in Part A and Part B (and Medicare Advantage)
- 63 days to enroll in a Medicare Part D drug plan

### COBRA is NOT coverage as a working employee

If you are covered by COBRA, you must enroll in Medicare during your initial enrollment period to avoid a lifetime of higher premiums.

## If I miss the initial and special enrollment periods, can I still enroll in Medicare?

Yes, you can enroll during general enrollment:

- **Medicare Parts A and B:** Each year from Jan. 1 to March 31 for coverage starting July 1
- **Medicare Advantage (Part C) and Medicare Part D drug plans:** Each year between Oct. 15 and Dec. 7 for coverage starting Jan. 1

Keep in mind:

- You will have to pay higher premiums
- The longer you go without coverage, the higher your premiums will be

## How much is the late enrollment penalty?

The penalty varies by plan:

- **Medicare Part B:** 10% per year for every 12-month period you sign up after age 65 or after losing coverage as a working employee
- **Medicare Part D:** At least 1% per month for every month after age 65 or after losing coverage as a working employee (or COBRA)

## How do I sign up for Medicare?

You can enroll for Medicare online at [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) or by visiting your local Social Security office.

- Phone: 800-633-4227 (Medicare)  
800-772-1213 (Social Security)
- Web: [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov)

Once you're enrolled in these Medicare plans, you can switch plans during Medicare's annual election period: Oct. 15–Dec. 7.