

MEDICARE ANNUAL ELECTION PERIOD

(AEP)-

The 2019 Medicare Annual Enrollment Period runs from October 15, 2019 through December 7, 2019. This period allows you to make changes to your current healthcare plan, which would become effective on January 1, 2020.

Medicare Advantage (MAPD) and Prescription Drug plans (Part D) change each year. In September you will receive an Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) from your insurance carrier. The ANOC will provide a comparison grid of your current 2019 plan with proposed changes for 2020. This is an important document that will outline any upcoming changes, including changes to your premiums, copays, deductibles, prescription drug formularies, etc.

Once you receive this information, **PLEASE CHECK IN WITH ME** even if you are planning to keep your plan the same. I want to confirm that you check the formulary (list of medications) to make sure your prescriptions are still covered. In addition, there may be changes to the provider network with Medicare Advantage plans. I want to be sure that your doctors continue to participate in the network and that you are happy with your plan.

If you would like to look at other options, please contact my office (724-260-0341) to schedule an appointment.

KEEP NEW MEDICARE CARDS WITH YOU-

As you know, Medicare started mailing new Medicare cards in April 2018. Your Medicare card now has a randomly assigned Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI) that is 11 characters in length, made up of numbers and letters. Each Medicare claim number is randomly generated and is unique and will not have any hidden or special meaning. This number is replacing your social security number to help prevent identity theft.

According to Medicare's website, you should destroy your old Medicare card when you get your new one. You can use your new Medicare card as soon as you receive it.

On your new card, it clearly states to KEEP YOUR NEW CARD WITH YOU. You may be asked to show it to your health care providers when you need care, especially at initial visits since your social security number is no longer on it. This is true even when you have a Medicare Advantage ID card. In this scenario, your Medicare Advantage ID card is your main card to show.

LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE-

If you're like most people, you don't want to think about the possibility of needing long-term care. As a result, you probably are thinking you really don't need to buy long term care insurance. Unfortunately, the reality is that 70% of all individuals turning 65 will need some form of long-term care during their lifetime. Medicare does not provide long term care insurance- it only covers a portion of skilled nursing costs up to 100 days.

Long term care insurance is coverage that will pay for assisted living, nursing home care or home health care in the event you are unable to care for yourself because of a disability, chronic condition, or inability to perform several daily living skills.

A long-term care or chronic illness policy or agreement can offer:

- **Independence** – It may allow you to stay in your home or community longer.
- **Income and asset protection** – Unlike government programs, you won't have to spend down your assets to qualify for benefits.
- **Choice of care** – Most products allow you to choose in-home or facility-based care, as well as your caregivers.

- **Peace of mind** – Family members may not need to become full-time caregivers.

Currently there are two main ways to transfer risk:

- **Traditional Long-Term Care Insurance**- these policies allow you to pick your benefit amounts and elimination periods (waiting periods). There is inflation protection. Unfortunately, we have been seeing very high rate increases with these policies.
- **Hybrid/Asset Based Long-Term Care Insurance**- these are newer policies that combine the benefits of life insurance with long term care. These are very expensive, however, if you look at the projected costs of long-term care in the next 20 years or so, it is much more expensive not to have it

If you are interested in learning more, or want a quote, please let me know.

HIGHMARK /UPMC Questions continue –

A Commonwealth Court judge ruled on June 14, 2019 that Highmark insurance members will no longer have discount access to many UPMC doctors after June 30th of this year. Judge Robert Simpson ruled that the consent decree will end June 30, severely limiting access to UPMC physicians and hospitals for thousands of people in Western Pennsylvania who have Highmark health coverage.

However, on June 24, 2019, HIGHMARK AND UPMC AGREED TO A 10 YEAR CONTRACT. This happened thanks to the help and persistence of PA Attorney General, Josh Shapiro. This will allow Highmark members in certain plans to have full in network access to UPMC. The details and conditions have not been finalized yet. This agreement goes into effect on July 1st of this year, which will give many Highmark members continued access to UPMC doctors and hospitals. This is a monumental time for the people of Western PA.

This DOES NOT APPLY TO COMMUNITY BLUE MEMBERS. Remember, Community Blue has always been a high-quality narrower network associated with Allegheny Health Network and some individual providers and facilities. This network never has and will continue not to have UPMC access.

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS - - -

On May 22nd we had an educational workshop on Medicare, explaining the different parts of Medicare, enrollment periods, prescription drug coverage and the coverage gap, as well as what Medicare Advantage plans are and how Medigap works. It was very interactive and informal.

Medicare is extremely confusing, and I feel strongly about holding these workshops about 3 times a year to try and clarify and help you navigate the Medicare maze. The next workshop will be held in September. Once I confirm a date, I will forward that information to you. In January of 2020 I hope to have Elaine Cole, from Social Security come present the many aspects of Social Security as well as Medicare. She has done this for the last several years and is a wonderful resource.

These workshops are especially helpful for individuals aging into Medicare or leaving group coverage. Feel free to invite family and friends to these workshops.

NEW EMPLOYEE STARTING - - -

I am happy to let you know that I have found a new employee, Susan Dunay, who seems like a wonderful, caring person. She previously worked in a preschool, so she must have the patience of a saint. Susan will hopefully be here year-round. I am looking forward to getting to work with her and having her meet and help all of you.

Visit my updated website at
www.bluepeakinsurance.com



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