

## **THE TIME TO REVIEW YOUR MEDICARE PLAN IS COMING UP SOON - MEDICARE ANNUAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD (AEP) - - -**

This occurs every year between October 15<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup>. It is a time when Medicare beneficiaries can review their coverage and decide if they want to stay with the same insurance carrier, the same plan or make a change.

In September, individuals with Medicare Advantage plans (Part C) and those with stand-alone Prescription plans (Part D) will receive an Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) from their current carrier. This is a very valuable document. It explains how your plan will be changing in 2021 in terms of premiums, copays, etc. It is laid out in a grid format that will compare your current benefits in 2020 with benefit changes in 2021.

It is very important that you review this information. There will also be provider, pharmacy and prescription drug information, depending on which type of plan it is. Please review to be sure your physicians, hospitals, etc. are still in the network. Check to see if your preferred pharmacies have changed and that your prescription drugs are still covered, as well as, if they remain in the same tier level of coverage.

Medigap plans are standardized and do not change benefit designs from year to year although the rates increase each year.

As always, I am happy to meet with you to review your plan as well as other possible options. Please call my office at 724-260-0341 to schedule either a visit at my office, a meeting via Zoom, or a phone consultation.

## **WE CAN STILL REVIEW YOUR PLAN DURING COVID19 - - -**

I understand how scary COVID 19 can be and want you to feel safe while we meet to review Medicare options. I'm happy to talk by phone, or Zoom, if you would like. If you wear a mask, I'm also able to meet in person.

## **PLEASE CREATE AN ACCOUNT ON MEDICARE.GOV - MEDICARE PLAN FINDER- - -**

Medicare.gov is a valuable site that allows you to compare Medicare Advantage as well as Prescription Drug plans. 2021 Medicare Advantage and Prescription Drug Plans should be uploaded on this website hopefully on 10/1/2020.

As many of you know, I often use this site to look up your medications and compare plan prices based on your prescriptions. It would be very helpful for you to create an account on this site. It should just take a few minutes to do so.

This system will automatically pull up your current coverage and Rx information from the last 12 months while you were on Medicare if you create a Medicare.gov account. Please bring your username and password with you for our meeting. Please let me know if you have any questions while creating this account.

**INDIVIDUALS MAY PAY MORE FOR MEDICARE PARTS B AND D - INCOME RELATED MONTHLY ADJUSTMENT AMOUNTS (IRMMA) - - -**

In order to get a Medicare Advantage or Medicare supplement plan, you need to have Medicare parts A and B. The standard part B premium amount in 2020 is \$144.60. While most people pay the standard premium amount, if your modified adjusted gross income is above a certain amount, you may pay an income related monthly adjustment amount (IRMMA). Medicare bases this off the modified adjusted gross income reported on your IRS tax return from 2 years ago. This is reportedly the most recent tax return information provided to Social Security by the IRS. You would pay an extra amount for both parts B and D.

your yearly income in 2018 (for what you pay in 2020) was			You pay each month (in 2020)
File individual tax return	File joint tax return	File married & separate tax return	
\$87,000 or less	\$174,000 or less	\$87,000 or less	\$144.60
above \$87,000 up to \$109,000	above \$174,000 up to \$218,000	Not applicable	\$202.40
above \$109,000 up to \$136,000	above \$218,000 up to \$272,000	Not applicable	\$289.20
above \$136,000 up to \$163,000	above \$272,000 up to \$326,000	Not applicable	\$376.00
above \$163,000 and less than \$500,000	above \$326,000 and less than \$750,000	above \$87,000 and less than \$413,000	\$462.70
\$500,000 or above	\$750,000 and above	\$413,000 and above	\$491.60

I pulled the above chart off the Medicare.gov website. This shows the IRMAA amount for part B only for 2020. This does change every year and there is also an additional IRMMA amount for part D.

**INDIVIDUALS WITH END STATE RENAL DISEASE (ESRD) WILL REPORTEDLY BE ABLE TO ENROLL IN MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS IN 2021- - -**

The Cures Act amended the Social Security Act to allow all Medicare eligible individuals with ESRD to enroll in Medicare Advantage plans beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

ESRD, or kidney failure, affects more than 500,000 Medicare beneficiaries. While these individuals are currently not eligible to enroll in MAPD programs, this will reportedly be changing for the upcoming year.

**UPCOMING MEDICARE EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS - - -**

As most of you know, I offer Medicare educational seminars approximately 3 times per year. Due to COVID 19 I have been holding these meeting virtually via ZOOM.

The next one will take place on Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup> at 11am. The focus is educational. I will explain the different parts of Medicare, the prescription drug coverage gap (commonly referred to as the donut hole), and the various types of plans available - how to apply, who is eligible as well as eligibility periods. No plan specific information will be discussed. If you are interested in attending, please let us know so that we can forward you a zoom invite.

I have also tentatively scheduled another virtual Zoom meeting on Thursday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 1 pm. Elaine Cole, Public Affairs Specialist from Social Security will be the guest presenter. She will be reviewing Social Security as well as Medicare. I will let you know more information closer to that time.

**TELEPHONE CONFERENCE CALLS TO REVIEW  
BROAD CHANGES IN YOUR PLAN - - -**

To try and assist you during the Annual Enrollment period, I have scheduled some general telephone conferences to review anticipated plan changes for 2021. You should receive an Annual Notice of Change which will show you any changes in your plan for 2021. This should arrive mid to late September.

After you have received your notice and have had the chance to review the changes in your rates and coverage for 2021, I am going to provide help on a broad level to all of you by scheduling phone conferences to present the information and discuss the general changes. Susan will be forwarding the schedule of calls shortly. Again, these will be held via phone so if you are interested in participating, please let us know so we can forward a link to join.

As always, I am also happy to meet individually in person, by Zoom or by phone to discuss your more specific needs and plan designs. Please call my office at your earliest convenience to schedule an appointment during the AEP, which is between October 15<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup>.

**ACA OPEN ENROLLMENT- - -**

This is for individuals not enrolled in Medicare who purchase health insurance. This year Pennsylvania will have its own state-based exchange, called Pennie. (PENNIE.com). This will be used instead of the Federal Marketplace at healthcare.gov. Also, open enrollment for 2021 health plans will run longer than in past years. It will run from November 1<sup>st</sup> to January 15<sup>th</sup>.

The 2021 Open Enrollment period runs from November 1<sup>st</sup> to January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in PA. The new plan you choose will go into effect on

January 1<sup>st</sup> of 2021 if you enroll by December 15<sup>th</sup>. All the details have not been released yet on this new site. For individuals in Ohio, you would still need to use the Federal website at healthcare.gov and the open enrollment on the Federal site ends December 15<sup>th</sup>. If you are currently enrolled in a plan, you will get information from the carrier letting you how the plan will be changing and what the new premium will be.

As many of you know, I am no longer able to assist with UPMC ACA plans. I was told that Highmark's ACA plans may continue to be more competitive this year. I have not seen any plan designs or rates yet. While I am not seeking this business out, I will be able to assist with the Highmark ACA plans for the upcoming year.

Most plans will automatically renew for the following year. However, if your plan is ending or if you don't currently have coverage and need it for the upcoming year, please be sure to act by December 15<sup>th</sup>. You may not be able to get 2021 coverage after this date unless you qualify for a Special Enrollment Period (SEP)- due to losing employer coverage, moving from another state, etc.



**\*\*If you would rather receive the Newsletters via email, please let me know.**

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