

## SECTION 7

# Get help paying your health & prescription drug costs

## What if I need help paying my Medicare prescription drug costs?

If you have limited income and resources, you may qualify for help to pay for some health care and prescription drug costs.

**Note:** [Extra Help](#) isn't available in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, or American Samoa. See page 88 for information about programs that are available in those areas.

**Extra Help is a Medicare program to help people with limited income and resources pay Medicare prescription drug costs.** You may qualify for Extra Help if your yearly income and resources are below these limits in 2018:

	Yearly income	Other resources
<b>Single person</b>	less than \$18,210 per year	resources less than \$14,100 per year
<b>Married person living with a spouse and no other dependents</b>	less than \$24,690	less than \$28,150 per year

These amounts may change in 2019. You may qualify even if you have a higher income (like if you still work, live in Alaska or Hawaii, or have dependents living with you). Resources include money in a checking or savings account, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs). Resources **don't** include your home, car, household items, burial plot, up to \$1,500 for burial expenses (per person), or life insurance policies.

If you qualify for Extra Help and join a Medicare drug plan, you'll:

- Get help paying your Medicare drug plan's costs.
- Have no coverage gap.
- Have no late enrollment penalty.

Most people with Medicare can only make changes to their drug coverage certain times of the year. If you newly get, lose, or have a change in your Medicaid or [Extra Help](#) status, you'll get a Special Enrollment Period to change plans.

If you have Medicaid or get Extra Help, you'll also be able to make changes to your coverage one time during each of these periods:

- January–March
- April–June
- July–September

If you made a change during one of these periods, it will take effect on the first day of the following month. You'll have to wait for the next period to make another change. You can't use this Special Enrollment Period from October–December. However, all people with Medicare can make changes to their coverage from October 15–December 7, and the changes will take effect on January 1.

**You automatically qualify for Extra Help if you have Medicare and meet any of these conditions:**

- You have full Medicaid coverage.
- You get help from your state Medicaid program paying your Part B [premiums](#) (in a Medicare Savings Program). See pages 86–87.
- You get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

To let you know you automatically qualify for Extra Help, Medicare will mail you a purple letter that you should keep for your records. You don't need to apply for Extra Help if you get this letter.

- If you aren't already in a Medicare drug plan, you must join one to use this Extra Help.
- If you don't join a Medicare drug plan, Medicare may enroll you in one so that you'll be able to use the Extra Help. If Medicare enrolls you in a plan, you'll get a yellow or green letter letting you know when your coverage begins, and you'll have a Special Enrollment Period to change plans.
- Different plans cover different drugs. Check to see if the plan you're enrolled in covers the drugs you use and if you can go to the pharmacies you want. Visit [Medicare.gov/find-a-plan](https://www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan), or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to compare with other plans in your area. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.
- If you have Medicaid and live in certain [institutions](#) (like a nursing home) or get home- and community-based services, you pay nothing for your covered prescription drugs.

**If you don't want to join a Medicare drug plan** (for example, because you want only your employer or union coverage), call the plan listed in your letter, or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. Tell them you don't want to be in a Medicare drug plan (you want to “opt out”). If you continue to qualify for [Extra Help](#) or if your employer or union coverage is [creditable prescription drug coverage](#), you won't have to pay a penalty if you join later.

**Important!**

If you have employer or union coverage and you join a Medicare drug plan, you may lose your employer or union coverage (for you and your dependents) even if you qualify for Extra Help. Call your employer's benefits administrator before you join a Medicare drug plan.

**If you didn't automatically qualify for Extra Help, you can apply anytime:**

- Visit [socialsecurity.gov/i1020](https://www.socialsecurity.gov/i1020) to apply online.
- Call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213. TTY users can call 1-800-325-0778.

Drug costs in 2019 for people who qualify will be no more than \$3.40 for each generic drug and \$8.50 for each brand-name drug. Look on the Extra Help letters you get, or contact your plan to find out your exact costs.

To get answers to your questions about Extra Help and help choosing a drug plan, call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). See pages 109–112 for the phone number. You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE.

## What if I need help paying my Medicare health care costs?

### Medicare Savings Programs

If you have limited income and resources, you may be able to get help from your state to pay your Medicare costs if you meet certain conditions.

#### There are 4 kinds of Medicare Savings Programs:

- 1. Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) Program:** If you're eligible, the QMB Program helps pay for Part A and/or Part B [premiums](#). In addition, Medicare providers aren't allowed to bill you for Medicare [deductibles](#), [coinsurance](#), and [copayments](#) when you get services and items Medicare covers, except outpatient prescription drugs.

To make sure your provider knows you have QMB, show both your Medicare and Medicaid or QMB card each time you get care. If you get a bill for medical care Medicare covers, call your provider about the charges. If you have Original Medicare, show your provider your Medicare Summary Notice (see page 52). It will show you have QMB and that you shouldn't be billed. Tell them that you have QMB and can't be charged for Medicare deductibles, coinsurance, and copayments. If this doesn't resolve the billing problem, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. Medicare will ask the provider to stop improper billing, and refund any incorrect payments you made. If you're in a [Medicare Advantage Plan](#), call your plan.

- 2. Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB) Program:** Helps pay Part B premiums only.
- 3. Qualifying Individual (QI) Program:** Helps pay Part B premiums only. You must apply each year for QI benefits and the applications are granted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- 4. Qualified Disabled and Working Individuals (QDWI) Program:** Helps pay Part A premiums only. You may qualify for this program if you have a disability and are working.

If you qualify for a QMB, SLMB, or QI Program, you automatically qualify to get [Extra Help](#) paying for Medicare prescription drug coverage. See pages 83–85.

#### Important!

The names of these programs and how they work may vary by state. Medicare Savings Programs aren't available in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

#### How do I qualify?

In most cases, to qualify for a Medicare Savings Program, you must have income and resources below a certain limit.

Many states figure your income and resources differently, so you should check with your state to see if you qualify.

**For more information**

- Call or visit your Medicaid office, and ask for information about Medicare Savings Programs. To get the phone number for your state, visit [Medicare.gov/contacts](https://www.medicare.gov/contacts). You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.
- Contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). See pages 109–112 for the phone number.

**Medicaid**

Medicaid is a joint federal and state program that helps pay medical costs if you have limited income and/or resources and meet other requirements. Some people qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid.

**What does Medicaid cover?**

- If you have Medicare and full Medicaid coverage, most of your health care costs are covered. You can get your Medicare coverage through Original Medicare or a [Medicare Advantage Plan](#) (like an HMO or PPO).
- If you have Medicare and/or full Medicaid coverage, Medicare covers your Part D prescription drugs. Medicaid may still cover some drugs and other care that Medicare doesn't cover.
- People with Medicaid may get coverage for services that Medicare may not or may partially cover, like nursing home care, personal care, and home- and community-based services.

**How do I qualify?**

- Medicaid programs vary from state to state. They may also have different names, like “Medical Assistance” or “Medi-Cal.”
- Each state has different income and resource requirements.
- In some states, you may need to be enrolled in Medicare, if eligible, to get Medicaid.
- Call your Medicaid office (State Medical Assistance Office) for more information and to see if you qualify. Visit [Medicare.gov/contacts](https://www.medicare.gov/contacts), or call 1-800-MEDICARE.

**Demonstration plans for people who have both Medicare and Medicaid**

Medicare is working with some states and health plans to offer [demonstration](#) plans for certain people who have both Medicare and Medicaid, called Medicare-Medicaid Plans. If you're interested in joining a Medicare-Medicaid Plan, visit [Medicare.gov/find-a-plan](https://www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan) to see if one is available in your area and if you qualify. Call your Medicaid office for more information.

**State Pharmacy Assistance Programs (SPAPs)**

Many states have SPAPs that help certain people pay for prescription drugs based on financial need, age, or medical condition. To find out if there's an SPAP in your state and how it works, call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP). See pages 109–112 for the phone number.

### **Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs (also called Patient Assistance Programs)**

Many major drug manufacturers offer assistance programs for people with Medicare drug coverage who meet certain requirements. Visit [Medicare.gov/pharmaceutical-assistance-program](https://www.medicare.gov/pharmaceutical-assistance-program) to learn more about Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs.

### **Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)**

PACE is a Medicare and Medicaid program offered in many states that allows people who need a nursing home-level of care to remain in the community. See page 68 for more information.

### **Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits**

SSI is a cash benefit paid by Social Security to people with limited income and resources who are blind, 65 or older, or have a disability. SSI benefits aren't the same as Social Security retirement benefits.

You can visit [benefits.gov/ssa](https://www.benefits.gov/ssa), and use the “Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool” to find out if you're eligible for SSI or other benefits. Call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 or contact your local Social Security office for more information. TTY users can call 1-800-325-0778.

**Note:** People who live in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, or American Samoa can't get SSI.

### **Programs for people who live in the U.S. territories**

There are programs in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa to help people with limited income and resources pay their Medicare costs. Programs vary in these areas. Call your Medicaid office (State Medical Assistance Office) to learn more. Visit [Medicare.gov/contacts](https://www.medicare.gov/contacts), or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to get the phone number. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.