



Social Security

Apply Online For
Medicare In Less Than
10 Minutes—Even If You
Are Not Ready To Retire



The background features a stylized graphic of a rising sun or flame, composed of numerous curved, overlapping blue and red bands that curve upwards and outwards. Small white stars are scattered throughout the design, particularly along the upper edge and within the bands.

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What is Medicare?

Medicare is a federal health insurance plan for people who are age 65 or older. People who are disabled or have permanent kidney failure can get Medicare at any age. Medicare has four parts—A, B, C, and D. Hospital insurance (Part A) is free for insured people and helps pay for inpatient hospital care and certain follow-up services. If you're eligible, you should apply for Part A a few months before you turn age 65, even if you're covered by other health insurance.

The other three parts of Medicare require premium payments, and if you don't enroll when you're first eligible, you may have to pay a late enrollment penalty for as long as you have coverage. Also, you may have to wait to enroll, which will delay coverage:

- Medical Insurance (Part B) helps pay for doctors' services, outpatient hospital care, and other medical services;
- Medicare Advantage plans (Part C) are available in many areas. People with Parts A and B can choose to receive all of their health care services through a provider organization under Part C; and
- Prescription drug coverage (Part D) helps pay for medications doctors prescribe.

For more information, ask for *Medicare* (Publication No. 05-10043), or go online to www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10043.pdf.

Who should use the online Medicare application?

You should, if you:

- Are within three months of turning age 65 or older;
- Want Medicare benefits and don't have Medicare coverage;
- Don't want to apply for monthly Social Security retirement benefits now; and
- Reside in the United States or one of its territories or commonwealths.

NOTE: *We automatically enroll people who already get Social Security retirement or disability benefits in Parts A and B; they don't need to complete an application. Residents of Puerto Rico and foreign countries will not receive Part B automatically. They must elect this benefit.*

Why should I apply online for Medicare benefits?

Applying online for Medicare benefits offers several advantages:

- You can start your application immediately—you do not have to wait for an appointment;

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- You can apply from the comfort of your home, or from any computer;
- You can avoid a trip to a Social Security office, saving you time and money; and
- You do not have to complete the application in one sitting. If you need a break, you can stop working on the application and restart it without losing any of the information you entered.

How secure is my personal information?

We use the most secure technology to keep your information private online.

What do I have to do?

Follow these simple steps:

- Select “Apply for Medicare Only” at www.socialsecurity.gov/medicare/apply.html;
- Before applying, you can visit the “Getting Ready” section to prepare;
- Use the “More Info” links if you need more information;
- Apply and complete the application, which normally takes 10 to 30 minutes; and
- Select “Submit Now” to send your application electronically to Social Security.

What happens next?

- You'll see a receipt on the screen that you can print and keep for your records;
- You'll also get an application number you can use to check the status of your application;
- We'll review your application and contact you if we need clarification or if we need to see any documents; and
- We'll process your application and mail you a letter with our decision.

Availability

The online application is available to you seven days a week during the following hours (Eastern time):

Monday-Friday: 5 a.m. until 1 a.m.

Saturday: 5 a.m. until 11 p.m.

Sunday: 8 a.m. until 10 p.m.

Holidays: 5 a.m. until 11 p.m.

When you are ready to retire

We can help you make an informed decision about when to apply for benefits based on your individual and family circumstances. Social Security has the tools to help you:

- Our *Retirement Estimator* at www.socialsecurity.gov/estimator allows you to get a real-time retirement benefit estimate and lets you create extra "what if" retirement choices;
- Our *When To Start Receiving Retirement Benefits* fact sheet (Publication No. 05-10147) helps you understand how Social Security fits into

your retirement decision. For details go to www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10147.pdf; and

- Our *Retirement Planner* at www.socialsecurity.gov/retire gives information about your Social Security retirement benefits under current law. The *Retirement Planner* also points out things you may want to consider as you prepare to retire.

Contacting Social Security

Visit www.socialsecurity.gov anytime to apply for benefits, open a **my Social Security** account, find publications, and get answers to frequently asked questions. Or, call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** (for the deaf or hard of hearing, call our TTY number, **1-800-325-0778**). We can answer case-specific questions from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Generally, you'll have a shorter wait time if you call after Tuesday. We treat all calls confidentially. We also want to make sure you receive accurate and courteous service, so a second Social Security representative monitors some telephone calls. We can provide general information by automated phone service 24 hours a day. And, remember, our website, www.socialsecurity.gov, is available to you anytime and anywhere!



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