**Medicare in Focus**

**For coverage that meets your needs**

In this video, we’ll go over key things to consider when signing up for a Medicare plan, and we’ll focus on the following 3 questions:

* What is Original Medicare?
* What is Medicare Advantage?
* Why does it matter which type of Medicare plan I choose?

Each person needs a Medicare plan that meets their own, unique health care needs. You can sign up for Medicare around your 65th birthday, but if your needs change, your plan can too. You can renew or change plans every year during Open Enrollment (October 15 through December 7).

**Original Medicare (fee-for-service)**, also known as Medicare Parts A and B or Traditional Medicare, is a publicly funded insurance program led by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for certain people who are 65 or older and certain people under 65 with disabilities.

Part A provides hospital insurance that includes services such as inpatient hospital stays, skilled nursing care, and home health care, and Part B provides medical insurance that includes services such as doctor visits, outpatient care, and medications administered in your doctor’s office.

You can also purchase Medicare supplemental insurance (Medigap) to help cover remaining health care costs when you have Original Medicare.

**Medicare Advantage**, also known as Medicare Part C, provides an alternative to Original Medicare and is run by private companies contracted by CMS.

A Medicare Advantage plan must cover all medically necessary services that Original Medicare covers and may offer additional services such as dental, hearing, and vision benefits.

If you enroll in Medicare Advantage, you may not purchase Medicare supplemental insurance (Medigap) to help cover remaining health care costs.

**Why does it matter which Medicare plan you choose?** All Medicare plans are not the same. It is important to compare coverage and cost differences between plans. **First, we’ll compare coverage.**

With Original Medicare, you can visit most doctors in the country, you do not need referrals to see a specialist, and you usually do not need special approvals to get certain health care services and medications covered. With Medicare Advantage, you usually can only see doctors in the plan’s network (which may only be in your local area), you may need a referral to see a specialist, and you may need special approvals to get certain health care services and medications covered, including injections and oral or intravenous drugs.

With Original Medicare, you can choose to buy Part D, an optional benefit that helps pay for outpatient prescription medications, or medications you receive from your pharmacy and take home. With Medicare Advantage, Part D is typically included.

It’s important to remember that Part B covers medications that are administered to you at the doctor’s office and that Part D covers medications you receive from your pharmacy and take at home.

**Now, we’ll compare cost.** With Original Medicare, you will pay a monthly cost, or premium, for Part B that varies based on your income. In addition, you will pay 20% of the cost of your health care services with no limit on what you pay out of pocket. However, when you have Original Medicare as your primary coverage, you may buy or use supplemental coverage like Medigap, coverage from a former employer or union, or Medicaid to cover any remaining costs.

With Medicare Advantage, you will pay a premium that varies based on the plan you select. For example, a plan with a low monthly premium could have high out-of-pocket costs. In addition, you may pay for Part A and Part B services up to a yearly limit. After you reach that limit, you will not pay for those services for the remainder of that year. With Medicare Advantage, you cannot buy or use Medicare supplemental coverage (Medigap) to cover those costs.

**When you enroll in Medicare, make sure you’re asking the right questions so that you choose the best plan for your health care needs.** **Some key questions to consider are:**

* Do all your doctors accept Medicare? Are they “in-network” if you select a Medicare Advantage plan?
* Do you travel frequently and visit doctors outside of your local area?
* Will your medications be covered, including medications administered by your doctor that are covered under Part B?
* Can you afford the out-of-pocket costs for office visits and medications?
* Would you like to purchase Medicare supplemental insurance (Medigap) to cover out-of-pocket costs, which is available with Original Medicare only?
* If you are working with an insurance broker, do you know if they are earning a commission to recommend certain plans?
* Do you have a friend or family member who can help you choose a Medicare plan?

By researching and considering these questions, you’ll be able to choose the best Medicare plan for you.

For additional resources on Medicare enrollment, please visit Medicare.gov.

Please note that this information is for your education only. It is not a recommendation or endorsement of any specific health plan or type of health plan. If you have questions about the information in this video, please consult your doctor or another qualified professional.