

Dollars & Sense

Extra Help Available with Medicare Prescription Drug Costs

Medicare's open enrollment period for prescription drug coverage in **2007** runs through **December 31**. During this period, all eligible beneficiaries may choose to enroll for the first time, choose a new plan or stay in the plan they already have. If you are on Medicare and have limited income and resources, remember that extra help is still available with cost of premiums, co-payments and deductibles.

You may qualify for this extra help if your income is below \$14,700 a year as a single person or below \$19,800 a year if you're married and living with your spouse. Your income can be higher if you support other family members who live with you or have earnings from work. For 2006, your total resources must be less than \$10,000 if you are single or \$20,000 if you are married and living with your spouse. Resources include such things as bank accounts, stocks and bonds, but do not include your house and car. Resources can be slightly higher (an additional \$1,500 per person) if you will use some of your money for burial expenses. In 2007, the resources limit will increase to \$10,210 for an individual and \$20,410 for a married couple living together.

You can complete an online application at www.socialsecurity.gov or call **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**) and a representative will assist you in filing an application over the phone. You can also visit your local Social Security office. For more information about the prescription drug program itself, you can go to www.medicare.gov, where decision-making tools such as the Medicare Prescription

Social Security

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Drug Plan Finder are available, or call **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)** (TTY **1-877-486-2048**).

Something for the Children

Many people think of Social Security as just a retirement program. While it is true that most of the people receiving Social Security collect retirement benefits, Social Security touches families in many other ways—including those struggling to meet the basic needs of children with disabilities.

Children with physical or mental disabilities may qualify for Supplemental Security Income, or SSI. When determining whether a child is eligible for SSI benefits, Social Security considers the income and resources of not only the child, but also the parents or other family members living in the household.

The child must have a physical or mental condition that seriously limits his or her daily activities, and the condition must be expected to last 12 months or more, or end in death. To help us determine whether a child is disabled, we will ask for any information available pertaining to the condition. We also will ask the applicant – the parent, grandparent or guardian – to sign releases that allow us to obtain information from doctors, hospitals, clinics, teachers, therapists and other professionals who have information about the child's condition.

You can learn more about SSI by reading *You May Be Able To Get Supplemental Security Income (SSI)* (SSA Publication No. 05-11069), at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/11069.html>. You also may want to visit Social Security's Kids and Families page at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/kids/index.htm>. There, you'll find information for kids, parents and teachers about Social Security numbers, benefits for children, the importance of saving and low-cost health insurance for children. You also may call us at **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**) or visit your local Social Security office.

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Social Security Frequently Asked Questions

Question: My application for Social Security disability benefits was denied and I need to appeal. Do I need to hire a lawyer?

Answer: Many people handle their own Social Security appeals, but you may choose to have someone help you with your appeal or to represent you. Your representative may be a lawyer or other qualified person familiar with you and the Social Security program. Social Security will work with your representative or with you. If you want more information about having a representative, visit Social Security online at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10075.html and read *Your Right To Representation* (SSA Publication No. 05-10075), or call the toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**), to request a copy.

Question: I moved to a new address after applying for a new Social Security card. I didn't receive the card before moving. What do I do now?

Answer: Notify the post office of your change of address, and the post office should forward your card to your new address. However, if you do not receive your card within a few weeks, contact your Social Security field office to get a replacement card. To learn more, visit our Social Security Number and Card page at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ssnumber/>, or call us at the toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**).

Question: I am 43 years old and make decent money. How much can I count on getting from Social Security when I retire?

Answer: Get an estimate by using one of the benefit calculators on our website at www.socialsecurity.gov/planners/calculators.htm. You also can find out just what you might expect from Social Security by checking your Social Security Statement, which is mailed each year to all workers age 25 and older approximately three months before their birthday. This Statement is intended to help you plan your financial future by providing estimates of the monthly Social Security retirement, disability and survivors benefits you and your family could be eligible to receive now and in the future. To learn more about the Statement, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/mystatement.

Question: I am a 60-year-old office worker and have been thinking a lot about retirement. But even with all of the financial advice available today, I still need help. Is it better financially to retire at age 62 and get reduced Social Security benefits for a longer time, or to try and hang on at my job until I reach full retirement age?

Answer: Figuring the best time to retire and collect Social Security benefits is very much a personal decision. You should take into account your financial resources, health, retirement plans and other variables. The answer may be different for each individual, depending on his or her circumstances. However, everyone should understand just how the decision to retire at a specific age will affect their Social Security retirement benefits. A good place to start is Social Security's Retirement Planner for those near retirement at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/retire2/near.htm>.

Question: I currently get Social Security disability benefits. Will my Social Security benefits go up when I reach retirement age in 2007?

Answer: No, the amount of your monthly Social Security benefit will not increase. It will, however, be changed from disability to retirement benefits in our records when you reach your full retirement age. For more information about Social Security disability and retirement benefits, visit Social Security's website at www.socialsecurity.gov, or call us toll-free at **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**).

Question: After the holidays, I plan to start the New Year off right – with an early retirement at age 62! Will my Medicare coverage begin then, too?

Answer: No. Medicare benefits based on retirement do not begin until you are age 65. If you retire at an earlier age, you might be able to continue to have medical insurance coverage through your employer. Or, you may decide to purchase it from a private insurance company until you reach age 65. For more information, you can visit the Social Security website at www.socialsecurity.gov or call **1-800-772-1213** (TTY **1-800-325-0778**) and ask for Medicare (SSA Publication No. 05-10043). You also may read our online version at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10043.html>.