

**Office of External Affairs**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**MEDICARE OFFERS TIPS WHEN ENROLLING  
IN PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLANS**  
**People with Medicare Reminded to Enroll Early in the Month**

Millions of people with Medicare enrolled in prescription drug plans are leaving pharmacy counters with their prescription drugs, and at a significant savings since the drug coverage began on Jan. 1.

“Medicare’s new prescription drug coverage is working for millions of seniors and people with disabilities. At the same time, we are making progress in fixing problems that some may be experiencing at the pharmacy counter,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt. “One way to reduce problems is for beneficiaries to enroll earlier in the month to ensure they will be able to get their medicines the first of the next month.”

If a person enrolls or changes plans before the 15th day of any month, it is much more likely that things will go smoothly at the pharmacy counter than if they enroll later in the month. A beneficiary who enrolls after the 15th of the month may need to spend extra time at the counter working details out.

CMS expects the percentages of those who have to spend extra time at the pharmacy counter will decline as more and more people get and use their new prescription drug cards.

People with Medicare should remember:

- After your prescription drug plan has processed your enrollment application, you should get an acknowledgement letter or confirmation letter from the plan you joined. This may take several days, so if you enrolled towards the end of January, you will get your letter sometime the first week of February.
- If you need to fill a prescription
  - Take your acknowledgement or confirmation letter with you to the pharmacy until you get a membership card.
  - If you haven’t gotten a letter yet, you might have one or more of the following to bring with you to the pharmacy: a welcome letter from the plan, an enrollment confirmation number, or a copy of an enrollment application signed by a plan representative.

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- If you have both Medicare and Medicaid or have been approved for the low-income subsidy (extra help paying for prescriptions), bring a copy of your yellow automatic enrollment letter from Medicare, a Medicaid card, your approval letter from the Social Security Administration, or other proof that you qualify for extra help.
- If you need to get a prescription before you get your letter or membership card, let your pharmacist know your plan name and bring one of the items above to get your prescriptions – it just may take some extra time.
- As a last resort, if you pay out-of-pocket for your prescription, save your receipts and work with your plan to be reimbursed.

“If you have any questions about your prescription drug coverage, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE or your plan’s toll-free phone line,” said Secretary Leavitt.

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CMS has posted a tipsheet for Medicare partners about enrolling early in the month at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/partnerships/downloads/earlyinmonthtipsheet.pdf>.