

Closing the Prescription Drug Coverage Gap

What You Need To Know About The Rebate Checks

The Affordable Care Act passed by Congress and signed by President Obama this year contains some important benefits for Medicare recipients.

If you have Medicare prescription drug coverage, and aren't already getting Medicare Extra Help, Medicare will automatically send you a one-time \$250 rebate check after you reach the coverage gap (also called the "doughnut hole") in 2010. This rebate is the first step toward closing the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap.

What is the coverage gap and how will I know if I've reached it?

Most Medicare drug plans have a coverage gap. This means that after you and your plan have spent a certain amount of money for covered drugs, you have to pay all costs out-of-pocket for your drugs (up to a limit).

The Explanation of Benefits notice, which your drug plan mails to you each month when you fill a prescription, will tell you how much you've spent on covered drugs and whether you've entered the coverage gap. You might also want to save your receipts so as to help track your spending.

Will I need to do anything to get this rebate check?

No. There are no forms to fill out. Medicare will automatically send a check that's made out to you. Protect yourself against scams. You don't need to provide any personal information like your Medicare, Social Security, or bank account numbers to get the rebate check. Don't give your personal information to anyone who calls you about the \$250 rebate check. Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to report anyone who does this. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

Go to stopmedicarefraud.gov to learn more about how Medicare is working with law enforcement to stop scams against seniors.

When will I get the rebate check?

If you reach the coverage gap this year and enter the Part D "doughnut hole", you will receive a one-time \$250 rebate check if you are not already receiving Medicare Extra Help. Starting on June 10th checks will be mailed monthly throughout the year as beneficiaries enter the coverage gap. This is a one-time benefit and beneficiaries who qualify will only receive one check after they reach the coverage gap.



Who will the checks be sent by? What will the return address on the checks be?

The \$250 checks will be mailed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the HHS logo will be clearly displayed on the envelope. It will also include Medicare's 1-800 toll-free number in case Medicare beneficiaries have any questions. It should be noted that the checks will be mailed by one of Medicare's contractor. The envelope will include the contractor's Wisconsin address in case any checks are returned for follow-up.

What if I don't get the rebate check when I should?

Beneficiaries who reach the doughnut hole after the program has begun should expect to receive their check within 45 days. Your rebate may be delayed if Medicare doesn't have information from your Medicare drug plan showing that you reached the coverage gap in time to include you in the next mailing. You should call your Medicare drug plan to make sure all of your information has been sent to Medicare.

If you don't get your rebate check, contact Medicare. (Having your receipts handy will be helpful when talking to Medicare). Individuals receiving Medicare Extra Help will not receive a rebate check.

You can also check to make sure Social Security has your correct home address. Call 1-800-772-1213 or your local Social Security office. TTY users should call 1-800-325-0778.

Have other questions about the \$250 rebate check or the Affordable Care Act and Medicare?

Please refer to the brochure Medicare and the New Health Care Law - What it Means for You that Medicare has sent you. You can also visit www.medicare.gov, or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

Cindy Loftin is the coordinator of the Senior Health Insurance Counseling Program (SHIP) at LIFE Senior Services sponsored by the Oklahoma Insurance Department. The SHIP Program may be reached at (918) 664-9000 or toll-free at (866) 664-9009.