

What is Medicare Supplement Insurance?

By now, you've likely heard about all the choices you have when it comes to Medicare. While taking in this abundance of information, you may recall hearing about Medicare Supplement health insurance, also known as Medigap. And now you might be wondering, "What exactly are Medicare Supplement plans?"

Medicare Supplement plans help pay some of the health care costs that Original Medicare (Parts A and B) does not cover – so they supplement your Original Medicare benefits. This means you would be getting help paying for out-of-pocket healthcare costs like copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles.

So what does a Medicare Supplement plan cover?

When choosing a Medicare Supplement plan, you can pick between 10 options, all named after a letter of the alphabet. For example: Medicare Supplement Plan "A" or "B". Each of these plans will provide a different type of coverage — and costs can vary depending on the insurance company. Let's take a look at the 10 different plan options to see what they cover:

	A	B	C	D	F	G	K	L	M	N
Part A coinsurance and hospital costs*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Part B coinsurance or copayment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	50%	75%	Yes	Yes
Blood**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	50%	75%	Yes	Yes
Part A hospice care coinsurance or copayment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	50%	75%	Yes	Yes
Skilled nursing facility care coinsurance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	50%	75%	Yes	Yes
Part A deductible	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	50%	75%	50%	Yes
Part B deductible	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Part B excess charges***	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Foreign travel exchange	No	No	80%	80%	80%	80%	No	No	80%	80%
Out-of-pocket limit****	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$5120	\$2560	N/A

* Up to an additional 365 days after Medicare benefits are used up

** First 3 pints

*** This is the difference between what your doctor charges and what Original Medicare covers

**** After you meet your out-of-pocket yearly limit and your yearly Part B deductible, the Medicare Supplement plan pays 100% of covered services for the rest of the calendar year.

Note: In Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, Medicare Supplement is standardized in a different way.

When can I enroll?

You can enroll in a Supplement plan during your Initial Enrollment Period (IEP). This includes the three months before your 65th birthday, the month you turn 65, and three months after your birthday. Or whenever you are enrolling into Part B for the first time. However, you need to be enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B before enrolling in a Supplement plan.

During this time, you have the right to buy any Supplement plan offered in your state, despite any pre-existing health conditions. If you miss your Initial Enrollment Period and decide to apply for a Supplement plan later on, you will likely be subject to underwriting and either denied coverage or charged more.

Is there anything else I should know about Medicare Supplement plans?

- You can not enroll in a Supplement plan if you already have Medicare Advantage.
- Medicare Supplement plans do not cover dental, vision, prescription drugs, long-term care, hearing aids, eyeglasses, or private-duty nursing.
- Supplement plans are accepted by any doctor or hospital that accepts Medicare across the entire country.
- Usually, there is no cap on out-of-pocket costs which means you'll continue to pay your share of the costs as long as you're enrolled in the plan.
- You can always renew your Medicare Supplement plan even if you have health problems. Typically, your insurance company will automatically renew for you as long as you pay your premium.
- You **MUST** have Medicare Parts A and B to enroll.

What are my next steps?

Getting all the coverage you need and can afford is tricky. If you're still wondering if a Medicare Supplement plan is right for you, a licensed health insurance agent can help answer any questions you may have. Call us directly at **(877) 744-6658** or medicare@healthsherpa.com.