

Important Notice from Howard County General Hospital About Your Prescription Drug Coverage and Medicare

Please read this notice carefully and keep it where you can find it. This notice has information about your current prescription drug coverage with CareFirst BlueChoice and about your options under Medicare's prescription drug coverage. This information can help you decide whether or not you want to join a Medicare drug plan. Information about where you can get help to make decisions about your prescription drug coverage is at the end of this notice.

- 1. Medicare prescription drug coverage became available in 2006 to everyone with Medicare. You can get this coverage if you join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan or join a Medicare Advantage Plan (like an HMO or PPO) that offers prescription drug coverage. All Medicare drug plans provide at least a standard level of coverage set by Medicare. Some plans may also offer more coverage for a higher monthly premium.**

- 2. Howard County General Hospital has determined that the prescription drug coverage offered by CareFirst BlueChoice is, on average for all plan participants, expected to pay out as much as standard Medicare prescription drug coverage pays and is considered Creditable Coverage.**

Because your existing coverage is, on average, at least as good as standard Medicare prescription drug coverage, you can keep this coverage and not pay a higher premium (a penalty) if you later decide to join a Medicare drug plan.

You can join a Medicare drug plan when you first become eligible for Medicare each year from November 15th through December 31st. This may mean that you may have to wait to join a Medicare drug plan and that you may pay a higher premium (a penalty) if you join later. You may pay that higher premium (a penalty) as long as you have Medicare prescription drug coverage. However, if you lose creditable prescription drug coverage, through no fault of your own, you will be eligible for a sixty (60) day Special Enrollment Period (SEP) because you lost creditable coverage to join a Part D plan. You should compare your current coverage, including which drugs are covered at what cost, with the coverage and costs of the plans offering Medicare prescription drug coverage in your area.

If you decide to join a Medicare drug plan, your CareFirst BlueChoice prescription coverage will not be affected. See below for more information about what happens to your current coverage if you join a Medicare drug plan.

Individuals who are eligible or who become eligible for Medicare Part D can keep this coverage if they elect Part D and CareFirst BlueChoice will coordinate benefits with Medicare Part D. Please note, some dependents may not be covered under the Medicare Part D plan.

If you do decide to join a Medicare drug plan and drop your CareFirst BlueChoice prescription drug coverage, be aware that you and your dependents may not be able to get this coverage back.

You should also know that if you drop or lose your coverage with CareFirst BlueChoice and don't join a Medicare drug plan within 63 continuous days after your current coverage ends, you may pay a higher premium (a penalty) to join a Medicare drug plan later.

If you go 63 continuous days or longer without prescription drug coverage that's at least as good as Medicare's prescription drug coverage, your monthly premium may go up by at least 1% of the base beneficiary premium per month for every month that you did not have that coverage. For example, if you go nineteen months without coverage, your premium may consistently be at least 19% higher than the base beneficiary premium. You may have to pay this higher premium (a penalty) as long as you have Medicare prescription drug coverage. In addition, you may have to wait until the following November to join.

NOTE: You'll get this notice each year. You will also get it before the next period you can join a Medicare drug plan, and if this coverage through CareFirst BlueChoice changes. You also may request a copy.

For more information about your options under Medicare prescription drug coverage...

More detailed information about Medicare plans that offer prescription drug coverage is in the "Medicare & You" handbook. You'll get a copy of the handbook in the mail every year from Medicare. You may also be contacted directly by Medicare drug plans.

For more information about Medicare prescription drug coverage:

- Visit www.medicare.gov
- Call your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (see the inside back cover of your copy of the "Medicare & You" handbook for their telephone number) for personalized help,
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

If you have limited income and resources, extra help paying for Medicare prescription drug coverage is available. For information about this extra help, visit Social Security on the web at www.socialsecurity.gov, or call them at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778).

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According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0938-0990. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 8 hours per response initially, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: CMS, 7500 Security Boulevard, Attn: PRA Reports Clearance Officer, Mail Stop C4-26-05, Baltimore, Maryland 21244-1850.

Remember: Keep this Creditable Coverage notice. If you decide to join one of the Medicare drug plans, you may be required to provide a copy of this notice when you join to show whether or not you have maintained creditable coverage and whether or not you are required to pay a higher premium (a penalty).

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