

OUR NEWS LETTER



Create your official Medicare account

There's an easy way to manage your Medicare coverage and claims online — **sign up for your official Medicare account!** If you already have an account, that's great! If you don't, visit **MyMedicare.gov** to get started.

4 things you can do with your Medicare account:

1. View your Medicare claims as soon as they're processed.
2. See a calendar of current and upcoming preventive services.
3. Keep track of your prescription drugs, all in one place.
4. View and print your Medicare card.

If you need assistance creating your Medicare account, you can chat with us by **clicking "Live Chat" in the top right corner of MyMedicare.gov.**

In Our Newsletter

[Create your official Medicare account](#)

[8 CRITICAL DECISIONS TO MAKE BEFORE YOU RETIRE](#)

[FEW HEALTH INSURANCE CONSUMERS BELIEVE 'MEDICARE FOR ALL' WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED](#)

[PEOPLE WITH MEDICARE WITH HIGHER INCOME](#)

[GETTING A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER FOR A NEW BABY](#)

[COULD DRINKING GREEN TEA HELP YOU LIVE LONGER?](#)

[SOCIAL SECURITY & YOU: TIPS FOR DEALING WITH THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION](#)

8 Critical Decisions to Make Before You Retire

Retirement may seem like a far-off dream, or it may be just around the corner. Either way, it is crucial to give thought to planning for your retirement before the day arrives. Your retirement years need not be a time of lack or boredom. They can provide you with many new opportunities to enjoy life and contribute to society. Planning ahead helps to ensure you are financially secure and able to enjoy your post-retirement years. Here are eight critical decisions to consider before you retire.

8. How Your Age Affects Your Social Security Benefits

According to the Social Security Administration, you may receive retirement benefits beginning at 62 years of age. However, your benefits are decreased if you claim them before you reach full (normal) retirement age. For those born from 1937-1942, the full retirement age is 65. The full retirement age increases by year of birth, and those born after 1960 have a full retirement age of 67. Meanwhile, delaying your retirement benefits may result in retirement credits. No matter when you claim your retirement benefits, it is critical to apply for Medicare benefits within three months of turning 65.

7. When to Retire

Your social security benefits are not the only considerations when deciding the best age for your retirement. You need also take into consideration the lifestyle you envision for your retirement years. Give thought to whether you have enough savings set aside to maintain your current way of life. Think about your current health situation and consider how you can provide for yourself and loved ones if your health declines. Poor health may warrant an earlier retirement. You will also want to consider the amount of activity you are accustomed to, and whether retiring early would leave you feeling a void.

6. How to Take Your Pension

Your employer may offer a pension plan in which you and your employer contribute funds to be paid out to you upon retirement. Factors that affect your retirement benefit payouts may include your age at retirement, the number of years you spent with the employer, and your wages. Many times, you will receive larger payouts if you delay retirement past the age of 60 or 65. Therefore, it pays to look into what benefits would be available to you at various ages of retirement. Other forms of pension plans may include profit-sharing plans, stocks bonuses, and employee stock options.

5. How to Invest After Retirement

After retirement, you will want to consider whether to leave your retirement funds invested in your 401(k) plan or transfer them to an IRA. Once you are in your retirement years, you may want to avoid taking excessive risks with your nest egg. According to Kathy Kristof of Kiplinger, factors that affect your retirement investment choices include your income sources, your budget, and your tolerance for risk. Consider speaking with a financial planner to determine the best plan for your future plans and needs.

4. Decide on Your Budget

To fully prepare for retirement, sit down and work out a budget for your retirement years. Include essential expenses, such as rent, food, clothing, and healthcare. Add in required expenses such as property taxes, insurance payments, and annual car registration fees. Expenses that make life enjoyable are also important entries in your budget. These items may include club memberships, vacations, and nights out with friends or family. Once you have designed your budget, give it a test drive. Living within the strictures of your proposed budget for a year or two before retiring will help you pinpoint areas you need to tweak.

3. Choose a Medicare Plan

When thinking ahead for retirement, it may help to look at the Medicare options that are available to you at the age of 65. There are several components to Medicare coverage. Medicare Part A covers inpatient hospital stays, skilled nursing facilities, and hospice care. Meanwhile, Part B is the medical insurance component, covering doctor's visits, outpatient care, medical supplies, and preventive services. Including Medicare Part D in your coverage provides prescription drug coverage to some Medicare plans. You can check out your Medicare coverage options at the official U.S. Government Site for Medicare.

2. Whether to Relocate

Retirement can be an excellent time to make changes and plan new adventures. Before retiring, it is critical to give thought to where you will be living. Some individuals continue to live happily in their current home. Others trade in a large home for one that may serve them better if stairs become difficult to navigate. You may decide that it is time to move to a warmer climate, a region with a lower cost of living, or to be nearer to loved ones. Furthermore, you may want to consider the perks of moving to a retirement community.

1. How to Fill Your Time

You will find there are many meaningful opportunities available to retirees to fill the time, provide satisfaction, and contribute to the world around you. However, retirement can seem daunting if you haven't taken the time to decide how you will use your time. Some individuals use their retirement years as an opportunity to travel and see the world. Others learn new hobbies, seek out volunteer positions, or forge new relationships with those around them. Be thinking about new pursuits you would like to investigate and make sure your retirement budget will allow for these activities.

Few health insurance consumers believe ‘Medicare for All’ would be implemented

By Insurance Forums Staff

Results of a survey released Nov. 12 by eHealth, Inc. (eHealth.com) show that while strong majorities of consumers support proposals to lower the cost of prescription drugs, Americans are sharply split on “Medicare for all” proposals and on whether such proposals might ever become reality.

Highlights from eHealth survey include the following:

- ***Many doubt “Medicare for all” would be implemented:*** If a candidate supporting “Medicare for all” such as Elizabeth Warren (shown above) or Bernie Sanders is elected as president in 2020, fewer than one-third (31%) think it likely that such a program would be implemented; 48% consider it unlikely.
 - ***People enrolled in ACA plans more likely than Medicare enrollees to support “Medicare for all” candidates:*** 41% of respondents enrolled in ACA health plans would support a “Medicare for all” candidate, compared to 33% of Medicare enrollees. In an October 2018 eHealth survey, 31% of Medicare enrollees said all Americans should have access to Medicare-like coverage.
 - ***Women are more likely than men to support “Medicare for all”:*** 38% of women said they would support a “Medicare for all” candidate, compared to 32% of men; by contrast, 44% of men said they would not support such a candidate, compared to 31% of women.
 - ***Most support government action to lower drug costs:*** 87% of respondents support government initiatives to negotiate directly with drug makers, while 74% support government initiatives to import drugs from outside the United States.
 - ***Some consumers are already buying lower-cost drugs from outside the U.S.:*** 21% of ACA plan enrollees with an income between \$75,000 and \$100,000 have purchased drugs from outside the country in order to save money.
-

Initial IRMAA Determination

What is it?

You'll get this notice if you have Medicare Part B and/or Part D and Social Security determines that any Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA) apply to you. This notice includes information about Social Security's determination and appeal rights.

When should I get it?

You may get this notice at any time.

Who sends it?

Social Security

What should I do if I get this notice?

Keep the notice.

Getting a Social Security Number for a New Baby

When to Get a Social Security Number for Your Child

The easiest way to get a Social Security number for your child is at the hospital after they are born and when you give information for your child's birth certificate.

If you wait to apply for a number at a Social Security office, there may be delays while SSA verifies your child's birth certificate. Processing times average about two weeks. See SSA's frequently asked questions for an estimate for your state. Learn more with the Social Security Numbers for Children publication (PDF, Download Adobe Reader).

If you want to claim your child as a dependent on your income tax return, open a bank account in their name, get medical coverage for them, or apply for government services for them, they will need their own Social Security number.

Could drinking green tea help you live longer?

News • January 8, 2020

A new large-scale Chinese study has found that drinking tea at least three times a week could increase your chances of living a longer and healthier life.

Carried out by researchers at the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, the new study looked at 100,902 Chinese adults who had no history of heart attack, stroke or cancer, and classified them into two groups based on their tea drinking habits: the habitual tea drinkers group drank tea three or more times a week; those in the never or non-habitual tea drinkers group drank the beverage less than three times a week. The participants were then followed for around seven years.

The findings, published Thursday in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, showed that those in the habitual tea consumption group were more likely to enjoy more healthy years of life and longer life expectancy. For example, the researchers estimated that 50-year-old habitual tea drinkers would develop coronary heart disease and stroke 1.41 years later and live 1.26 years longer than those who never or seldom drank tea.

Habitual tea drinkers also had a 20 percent lower risk of incident heart disease and stroke, a 22 percent lower risk of fatal heart disease and stroke, and a 15 percent lower risk of all-cause death, compared with never or non-habitual tea drinkers.

The team also investigated whether changing tea drinking habits could affect the risk of disease and death among a subset of 14,081 participants. After assessing them at two different time points, they found that those who maintained their regular tea consumption at both surveys had a 39 percent lower risk of incident heart disease and stroke, 56 percent lower risk of fatal heart disease and stroke, and 29 percent decreased risk of all-cause death, compared to consistent never or non-habitual tea drinkers.

"The protective effects of tea were most pronounced among the consistent habitual tea drinking group," said senior author Dr. Dongfeng Gu. "Mechanism studies have suggested that the main bioactive compounds in tea, namely polyphenols, are not stored in the body long-term. Thus, frequent tea intake over an extended period may be necessary for the cardioprotective effect."

The findings also suggest that drinking green tea was linked with around a 25 percent lower risk of incident heart disease and stroke, fatal heart disease and stroke, and all-cause death, however, no significant associations were found for black tea.

Dr. Gu points out that a preference for green tea is unique to East Asia. "In our study population, 49 percent of habitual tea drinkers consumed green tea most frequently,

while only 8 percent preferred black tea. The small proportion of habitual black tea drinkers might make it more difficult to observe robust associations, but our findings hint at a differential effect between tea types."

The researchers also add that green tea is a rich source of polyphenols, which protect against cardiovascular disease and risk factors for the disease, such as high blood pressure. Black tea, on the other hand, is fully fermented. This process oxidizes the polyphenols and may cause them to lose their antioxidant effects. Black tea also tends to be served with milk, which previous research has shown may counteract the beneficial health effects of the drink.

Social Security & You: Tips for dealing with the Social Security Administration

Near the end of last year, I wrote a couple of columns in which readers complained about the service they received from the Social Security Administration. After that column ran, I predictably got emails from people with more complaints. They are usually from people griping about long wait times when they call the agency's 800 number or from people who claim to have received misinformation from an SSA rep. I think I've aired enough of their grievances already.

Instead, today I'm going to look at the flip side of that SSA service coin. Because I also received quite a few emails from readers who told me that their dealings with Social Security offices and representatives had been professional, courteous and efficient. And some of those folks shared thoughts and insights with me that I will pass along to you.

I also heard from several people who currently work for SSA, and they shared their views with me, too. Their potentially valuable advice is included in this column.

So here are some tips for how to improve your experience when you are dealing with representatives of the Social Security Administration.

Many people complained to me about wait times when they call SSA's national hotline at 800-772-1213. More than a few said the wait time was two hours or more. But quite a few readers told me that when wait times are long, SSA always offers a callback service. In other words, you can leave your number and an SSA rep will call you back within a specified period of time. For example, one reader told me this:

"I called the 800 number to file for spousal benefits on my husband's record. I was told there would be a two-hour wait. I was offered the option of leaving my number for a callback, which I did. And almost exactly two hours later, and nice young man called me back. He was helpful and courteous, and we finished my application in less than a half-hour. I couldn't have been more pleased with the service I got."

So, obviously, one tip would be to make use of SSA's callback procedure if you are trying to get answers from the 800 number service and the wait times are long.

And one SSA telephone representative told me that frequently, people who call the 800 number simply are not prepared to answer even the most basic questions. For example, he said one woman called to file for widows benefits, and she didn't have her husband's Social Security number available. He said she spent about 10 minutes searching for the number before she came back on the phone. And he said there were other bits of basic information he needed that she did not have readily available. He estimated the call took 30 minutes longer than it needed to because of the woman's lack of preparation. "This was a half-hour I could have spent helping someone else. And this was not an unusual situation. This is part of the reason why so many people have to wait so long to talk to an SSA rep."

You wouldn't think I should have to pass this along as a tip. But, apparently, I do. Be prepared! Think through your situation before you make a call, and have names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, dates of marriage and/or divorce (if filing for spousal benefits) and dates of death (if filing for survivors benefits) readily available.

Another SSA telephone rep told me I wouldn't believe how many people get on the phone with a huge chip on their shoulder. She said, "They are obviously very angry and upset, many times about a letter they received from the SSA with information they don't understand, and they start yelling at me almost before I have a chance to say hello!" She went on to say, "And the whole conversation just goes south from there, and the call takes far longer than it needs to just because the customer is so irate that he or she can't or won't listen to what I am trying to say."

So there is another tip. If you have a possible problem with the SSA, take a couple of breaths before you call them. And remember that the phone rep you are talking to didn't personally send you the letter you don't understand or stop your benefits if you are missing a Social Security check. They really are there to help you, not to get into verbal fisticuffs with you.

Speaking of letters from the SSA, here is another tip: Lots of times, your benefit amount will change. For example, maybe you'll suddenly find an extra deposit from Social Security in your account. The SSA always sends a letter explaining the

change. But the letter always lags behind the benefit change. That's because the benefit can change with the push of a few buttons, but a letter has to be prepared and then find its way to you through the postal service.

So what's the tip? If some change happens to your Social Security benefits, don't jump on the phone right away to find out what happened. Wait a few days for the explanatory letter to show up. There's a pretty good chance it will answer all of your questions.

Many people wrote to tell me to remind readers that so much of Social Security's business can be handled online at <https://www.socialsecurity.gov>. I was going to start listing all the things you can do online. But the list got so long I decided to do this instead. Go to the website, and near the top of the homepage, click on the "Online Services" icon. You will find a list of available online services that may surprise you -- including getting answers to frequently asked questions, reviewing your records, filing for various kinds of Social Security benefits, managing your account once your checks start and replacing a lost Medicare card. And so much more. So, another tip: If you need some help from Social Security, try going online first.

Finally, another reader had this tip: He reminded people to plan ahead. He guessed (correctly) that many people wait until the last minute to file for benefits and take care of other Social Security business. He said, "I wanted to file for benefits at my local Social Security office. I called the 800 number three months before I wanted my benefits to begin. The first available in-office appointment was six weeks down the road. But that was no problem for me because I was doing things so far in advance."

Dental Coverage
for as
low as
\$15
a month!

Click Here for more
Details
OR
Call 1-800-739-4700

To contact us: go to www.healthcareil.com or Call (800) 739-4700
