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Closing the “donut hole” — Medicare prescription drugs are becoming more affordable

The health law includes benefits to make your Medicare prescription drug coverage (Part D) more affordable. This year, if you reach the Part D coverage gap (also called the “donut hole”):

- you’ll get a 50% discount on covered brand-name drugs
- you’ll pay 86% of the plan’s cost for covered generic drugs

You’ll keep getting these benefits until you reach the end of the coverage gap. You’ll get even more savings on your brand-name and generic drugs during the coverage gap over the next few years until it’s closed in 2020. Find out more about the coverage gap and savings you’ll get until 2020 at www.medicare.gov.

Looking for a high-quality provider? Medicare can help.

Do you need surgery and aren’t sure which hospital to choose? Does your mom need nursing care? Are you leaving the hospital, but you still need care in your home? Medicare’s online tools can help you find high-quality providers for any of these situations.

- [Compare hospitals in your area](#) to see how they did with different situations, like giving their surgery patients an antibiotic at the right time to help prevent infection. You can also see patient ratings, like the percentage of patients that recommend the hospital.
- [Compare nursing homes in your area](#) to find out about health and fire safety inspection results, whether complaints have been filed about the nursing home, and how the nursing home did in different situations, like percentage of residents who report moderate or severe pain.
- [Compare home health agencies in your area](#) to see how often a home health agency used best practices when caring for its patients and whether its patients got better in certain important areas of care, like bathing or getting out of bed.

Find even more tools to help you find doctors, Medicare plans, or medical equipment suppliers at www.medicare.gov.

Protect yourself from Hepatitis B

Are you at risk for getting Hepatitis B? Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the liver. Approximately 2,000–4,000 people die every year from Hepatitis B-related liver disease.

The best way to prevent Hepatitis B is by getting the Hepatitis B vaccine, which is usually given as 3 shots over a 6-month period. You need to get all 3 shots for complete protection. Medicare covers these [shots](#) for free if you're at medium or high risk for Hepatitis B. Ask your doctor if these shots are right for you.

July 28th is World Hepatitis Day. To find out more about preventing and treating Hepatitis B, visit the [Centers for Disease Control](#). Also, watch our short [video](#) about Medicare's efforts to prevent and treat hepatitis.

You're not alone—caregivers share their stories

Even when it's a labor of love, caring for a friend or family member can be hard, and you may wonder whether anybody understands what you're going through. Actually, *many* people can relate to your situation—nearly 66 million Americans serve as caregivers.

[James Patterson](#) became a caregiver to his wife on New Year's Day 2005, after she was hospitalized with complications from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). His "best advice" for new caregivers: "Be patient and be in it for the long haul. Get as much information as possible and know that people are there to support you."

Read more caregiver stories or share your story at www.medicare.gov.

Need medical equipment or supplies? Be sure you're using the right supplier

Medicare covers items like oxygen equipment and supplies, wheelchairs, walkers, and hospital beds ordered by a doctor or other health care provider enrolled in Medicare. In all areas of the country, you must get your covered equipment or supplies and replacement or repair services from a Medicare-approved supplier for Medicare to pay.

In some areas of the country if you need certain items, you must use specific suppliers, or Medicare won't pay for the item and you likely will pay full price. This "competitive bidding" program is effective in certain areas in these states: California, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas. **The program is scheduled to expand to 91 more areas around the country in July 2013.**

Find Medicare-approved suppliers at www.medicare.gov. If your ZIP code is in a competitive bidding area, the items included in the program are marked with an orange star. Or, find out more about what equipment and supplies are covered by Medicare at www.medicare.gov.



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