

MEDICARE *talk*

Important Information for People on Medicare from the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care

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Visit your local county extension office for health and community resources



Arkansas Foundation
for Medical Care

The Medicare Quality Improvement
Organization for Arkansas

www.afmc.org

SPECIAL FEATURE

YOUR MEDICARE RIGHTS

What you



need to know

When it comes to your health, you want to get the best care possible. Not only that, you deserve it! Medicare has guidelines in place to make sure you get good health care. You also play a role in making sure you get good care. Take the time to learn about your rights on Medicare and how they affect you. That way, you can get the care you need, when you need it.

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When your provider tells you Medicare will no longer pay:

■ **Notice of Medicare Provider Non-Coverage**

Some health care providers must give you a “Notice of Medicare Provider Non-Coverage” before they stop your care. The types of health care providers are: home health agencies, hospices, skilled nursing facilities and comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facilities.

The health care provider must give you the “Notice of Non-Coverage” at least two days or two visits before they think your services should end.

You will be asked to sign and date the notice and should be given a copy. If you refuse to sign the notice, the health care provider will make a note, and that date will still serve as the “date of receipt.”

All of the information on the notice must be correct and should include:

- The date that Medicare coverage of your services will end.
- A description of how you could appeal the decision.
- A description of your right to detailed information about your care.
- Any other information required by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

If you disagree with the decision to end your care:

■ **Immediate Appeals**

If you disagree with a health care provider’s decision to stop giving you care, call the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care (AFMC), the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) for Arkansas. AFMC’s number is 1-888-354-9100;

it should also be listed in the Notice of Non-Coverage that you receive. This number is answered from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week. If you call on a weekend or holiday, leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible. If you call after hours, leave a message and someone will return your call the next day.

If AFMC reviews your case and agrees with the health care provider that you no longer need care, you can ask for a “reconsideration,” which is a second review by a Qualified Independent Contractor (QIC). A QIC is an impartial organization that is contracted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. AFMC staff will tell you how to request a reconsideration when the review results are given to you by telephone. You will

not be billed until the entire appeal process is complete. But, if all reviews show that the provider was correct in stopping your care, you will have to pay for any care you received after the date stated in the original notice.

Every person on Medicare has the same basic rights:

- To get all the care you need.
- To stop getting care only when it is best for your medical needs.
- To be told about decisions that affect whether Medicare will pay.
- To request a review of notices that say Medicare won’t pay.
- To get a written plan for your care when you leave the hospital.

When you’re in the hospital:

■ **An Important Message from Medicare**

When you are admitted to the hospital, you will get a notice called “An Important

Message from Medicare.” This notice explains what to do if you think you are being discharged too soon. You may get a second copy of this notice before you are discharged to remind you that you can request an immediate review if you disagree. The hospital will ask you to sign and date the notice. They will keep a copy in your medical record.

The “Important Message from Medicare” will tell you how to request an immediate review of your case by calling AFMC at 1-888-354-9100 while you are still in the hospital. If you request review by midnight of the planned day of discharge, the hospital cannot discharge you until after you receive AFMC’s review decision. AFMC will complete the review within one day. If AFMC

Questions, complaints or concerns about Medicare?

Call 1-800-MEDICARE
(1-800-633-4227)
or AFMC at 1-888-354-9100.

agrees with the hospital that you are ready for discharge, you would become financially responsible beginning at noon of the day after AFMC completes the review and notifies you.

If you have a concern about your care:

■ **Complaints**

If you have a complaint about the quality of your medical care, call AFMC at 1-888-354-9100. AFMC will ask you to send your concerns in writing (they can also help you put your concerns in writing). AFMC will get your medical records, and a doctor at AFMC will carefully review them. Nothing can change what happened to you, but your call to AFMC may start changes that will benefit you or others in the future.

Finding an answer to your complaint:

■ **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

Sometimes AFMC may not be able to find information about your concern in your medical record. Or, your concern may not be about the medical care you received. In these cases, alternative dispute resolution, such as **mediation** or **facilitated resolution**, may be an option for you.

Mediation brings you and your health care provider together to talk about your concern. The goal is to reach a conclusion that you both agree to. Mediation takes place face-to-face, and these discussions are led by an unbiased person trained in mediation.

In facilitated resolution, you and your provider do not have any direct contact. All communication happens by phone or by mail through the facilitator. The goal is to provide an opportunity for you to voice your concerns and for your provider to make changes if needed. ▲

PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU:

Adults and children should get a yearly shot

Flu season in Arkansas is almost here, and now is the time to protect yourself.

The best way is to get a yearly flu shot. The flu shot can help you avoid the aches and pains that go along with being sick. Most Arkansas seniors should get a flu shot. Talk to your doctor.

Adults, teenagers and children should also get a flu shot, or have another type of vaccination, such as the nasal spray vaccine. The nasal spray vaccine is only for healthy people age 5 to 49.

People who should get a flu shot every fall are:

- Everyone over age 50.
- All children age 6 months to 5 years.
- Children and adolescents (age 6 months to 18 years) who receive long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after getting the flu.
- Women who will be pregnant during flu season.
- Adults and children who have chronic lung (including asthma), heart, kidney, liver, blood or metabolic disorders (including diabetes).
- Adults and children who have a suppressed immune system (including immunosuppression caused by medications or HIV).
- Adults and children who have any condition that can make breathing difficult, or that can increase the risk of breathing foreign matter (such as fluids) into the lungs. Such conditions include cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord

injuries, seizure disorders or other neuromuscular disorders.

- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities.

People who care for those at high risk should also be vaccinated.

These people include:

- Health care providers.
- Healthy family members (including children) and caregivers of children younger than 5 years and adults older than 50 years.
- Healthy family members (including children) and caregivers of people with any of the medical conditions listed above.

Flu shots don't cause the flu

Today's flu vaccine is safe and can't cause the flu. It's important to get a shot each year, because flu viruses change. A few people who get a flu shot might be a little sore where they get the shot. Or, they might have a headache or low fever.

People who are allergic to eggs may get sick if they have a flu shot. That's because the viruses used in the flu vaccine are grown in eggs. So if you're allergic to eggs, don't get the shot.

Other people who shouldn't get the flu shot include: children under 6 months of age, people with an acute febrile illness (a sudden, high fe-

ver), people who have had a severe reaction to the flu shot in the past, and people who developed Guillain-Barre' syndrome (muscle weakness, possibly causing permanent damage) within 6 weeks of getting a flu shot in the past.

Will Medicare pay?

Both Medicare Part B and Medicaid pay the full cost of the flu and pneumonia shots. There are no deductibles or co-payments as long as you use a Medicare- or Medicaid-approved provider.

For more information about the flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/flu/. ▲



YOUR HEALTH:

When seconds matter, electronic records can help

If you are in an emergency situation, you need care fast. In fact, seconds can make the difference between life and death. That's why Arkansas health care leaders are planning for a new resource called "health information exchange," or HIE.

HIE is the process of electronically sharing medical information between hospitals, clinics and other health care settings. With HIE, a doctor from anywhere in the state can quickly check your medical information — in seconds. When it matters most, you'll get the care you need.

More and more doctors, hospitals and other health care providers are starting to recognize the value of HIE. A good first step into adopting technology is when your doctor starts to use "electronic health records."

An electronic health record is similar to a paper one. It contains the same kind of information about your health history and your treatment. But electronic health records are accessed with a computer and special software. Doctors or other health care workers type in doctors' orders and other information, instead of writing it by hand. Instead of reading a piece of paper, they can read the record on a computer screen. The computer software is set up to let only certain people read

your health records, so your information is still kept private.

Why switch to electronic health records?

Electronic records are easier to read. Because information is typed instead of handwritten, health care workers don't have to try to read each other's handwriting. This can prevent errors.

Records are easier to access.

Health care workers don't have to pull records by hand and keep up with a "paper trail." Instead, the records can be quickly accessed and read on a computer or even a handheld device.

Quicker service. When you call with a question, the nurse can quickly get to your chart using a computer, so you won't have to wait as long.

Better record of your medications and refills. Some electronic systems can even send your prescription to the pharmacy right away, so it might be waiting for you when you get there.

Better use of information. Health professionals can more easily track the care provided to their patients, to make sure patients are getting the right kind of care.

Better, safer medical care. With thorough, readable health records on their patients, doctors can more easily provide the best care for each patient. ▲

■ DID YOU KNOW...?

Visit your local county extension office for health, community resources

If you've lived in Arkansas for long, chances are you've heard about the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. For years, the service has helped Arkansans learn about home and garden topics, such as landscaping and insect control. But, the Cooperative Extension offers much more than gardening advice. Health information, emergency planning and family life are just a few of the topics that you can find at the Extension's Web site, online at www.uaex.edu.

Other topics include:

- Volunteer opportunities
- Financial information
- Food and nutrition
- Wildlife
- Recycling
- 4-H programs
- Taxes
- Leadership
- Economic development
- Child care
- Forestry

You can also find this information at your local extension office. For directions to your local office, click on "Find us" at www.uaex.edu or call 501-671-2000. Extension staff can help you sign up for newsletters that you are interested in. They can also help you access information that you can't find.

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension is a part of the University of Arkansas' Division of Agriculture. ▲



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Inside this issue of

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Your Medicare information source from the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care

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If you're in an emergency situation, you need care fast, and one of the ways to help is through "health information exchange," or HIE.

This material was prepared by the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care Inc. (AFMC), the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for Arkansas, under contracts with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Medical Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS and Arkansas DHS policies. The Arkansas Department of Human Services is in compliance with Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act. QB1-MT.NEWS,4-10/07

**Learn more
about AFMC
and find answers to
Medicare questions
on our Web site:**

www.afmc.org

**Call AFMC on our Medicare
helpline at 1-888-354-9100.**

You can call AFMC if you have:

- concerns about the quality of care you receive;
- received a notice of discharge or Medicare noncoverage from a hospital, skilled nursing facility, hospice, home health agency, or comprehensive outpatient rehab facility and you disagree;
- questions about your Medicare rights.