

Dear Marci

AFT and NYSUT

Volume 22, Issue 1, January 2, 2023

How are drug costs changing in 2023?

Dear Marci,

I think my Part D premium is going up in 2023, which I expected. But I've also heard that everyone with Medicare might be saving money on drug costs because of recent legislation. How are drug costs changing in 2023?

-Jean-Claude (New York, NY)

Dear Jean-Claude,

It's true that most people will experience some kind of change to their Part D costs each year. Part D plans can change the drugs they cover, their pharmacy networks, and their costs (such as premiums, copayments, coinsurance charges, and deductibles) from year to year. If you have Medicare prescription drug coverage, often referred to as Part D, your plan should have notified you about any changes in costs for 2023.

This year there are additional changes in Part D costs more generally due to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which is likely the legislation you heard about. While some changes created by the IRA take effect in future years, the following changes take effect in 2023:

Insulin will be more affordable. The IRA limits co-payments to \$35 per month for Part-D covered products and for insulin furnished under B, with no deductible for insulin products on your plan's formulary. Currently, over [3 million](#) Part D enrollees use insulin, and [one in three](#) people with Part D plans have diabetes. On average, in [2020](#), they paid \$600 out-of-pocket for insulin. But some had considerably higher costs—25% spent over \$800 and 10% spent over \$1,300.

Because this change went into effect so quickly, the information about these lower costs was not always included in the Medicare [Plan Finder](#) tool during Fall Open Enrollment. This may have led some people to enroll in a plan that does not meet their needs. If you discover that you are not in the right plan, you may be able to change plans. Contact 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-

633-4227), your [State Health Insurance Assistance Program \(SHIP\)](#), or the [Medicare Rights Center](#) if you think this applies to you.

People with Medicare will be able to receive critical vaccines free of charge. The IRA eliminates cost-sharing and deductibles for Part D vaccines that are recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), such as the shingles vaccine. This policy already applies to [Medicare Part B](#) and [most private plans](#). Its expansion will save you costs and improve your access to necessary preventive care.

This will help the approximately [4 million](#) Medicare beneficiaries who receive a Part D-covered vaccine each year—including the [3.6 million](#) who received the shingles vaccine in 2020, at an average cost of over \$100. However, it will also reach millions more. [Research](#) shows Part D immunization rates are well below those for Part B, likely due to cost-sharing. The additional expense is a well-established barrier to beneficiary receipt of recommended vaccines.

You can read more about IRA changes that will take effect in future years [here](#).

-Marci



Health Tip

For many people, the start of the new year is a time to reflect on what we've learned and set new goals as we look ahead. You might evaluate your physical and mental health and think of the changes you want to see in the coming year. Making big changes can be tough, though, and habits can be challenging to break. As you think of what you would like to accomplish in 2023, [Mayo Clinic Health System](#) reminds us that S.M.A.R.T. goals can help set us up for success:

- **Specific:** Eating healthier sounds like a good goal, but what does it really mean? Aim for specific goals instead, like eating three servings of vegetables a day.
- **Measurable:** Make your goal one you can measure. Sleeping at least 8 hours a night is a goal you can track. A goal of sleeping more is not so easy to track.
- **Attainable:** Avoid aiming too high or too low.
- **Realistic:** Choosing realistic goals that you can meet will reinforce your efforts and motivate you to keep going.
- **Trackable:** Choosing specific, measurable goals means you can track your progress over time. Write your efforts down or track them electronically so you can see how far you've come!

Dear Marci is a biweekly e-newsletter designed to keep you -- people with Medicare, social workers, health care providers and other professionals -- in the loop about health care benefits, rights and options for older Americans and people with disabilities.

The Medicare Rights Center is a national, nonprofit consumer service organization that works to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities through counseling and advocacy, educational programs, and public policy initiatives.