

SECTION

Medigap Basics

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What's a Medigap policy?

A Medigap policy is an insurance policy that helps supplement Original Medicare and is sold by private companies. A Medigap policy can help pay some of the remaining health care costs that Original Medicare doesn't pay for covered services and supplies, like copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles. Original Medicare pays for much, but not all, of the cost for covered health care services and supplies. These are “gaps” in Medicare coverage.

If you have Original Medicare and a Medigap policy, Medicare will pay its share of the [Medicare-approved amounts](#) for covered health care costs. Then your Medigap policy pays its share. A Medigap policy is different from a [Medicare Advantage Plan](#) (like an HMO or PPO) because those plans are ways to get Medicare benefits, while a Medigap policy only supplements the costs of your Original Medicare benefits.

Note: Medicare doesn't pay any of your costs for a Medigap policy.

All Medigap policies must follow federal and state laws designed to protect you, and policies must be clearly identified as “Medicare Supplement Insurance.” Each standardized Medigap policy must offer the same basic benefits, no matter which insurance company sells it.

Cost is usually the only difference between Medigap policies with the same letter sold by different insurance companies.

What Medigap policies cover

The chart on page 11 gives you a quick look at the standardized Medigap Plans available. You'll need more details than this chart provides to compare and choose a policy. Call your [State Health Insurance Assistance Program \(SHIP\)](#) for help. See pages 47–48 for your state's phone number.

- Insurance companies selling Medigap policies are required to make Plan A available. If they offer any other Medigap policy, they must also offer either Plan C or Plan F to individuals who are not new to Medicare and either Plan D or Plan G to individuals who are new to Medicare. Not all types of Medigap policies may be available in your state.
- Plans D and G with coverage starting on or **after** June 1, 2010, **have different benefits** than Plans D or G bought **before** June 1, 2010.
- **Plans E, H, I, and J are no longer sold**, but, if you already have one, you can generally keep it.
- Starting January 1, 2020, Medigap plans sold to people new to Medicare won't be allowed to cover the Part B deductible. Because of this, **Plans C and F will no longer be available to people who are new to Medicare on or after January 1, 2020.**
 - If you already have either of these two plans (or the high deductible version of Plan F) or are covered by one of these plans prior to January 1, 2020, you'll be able to keep your plan. If you were eligible for Medicare before January 1, 2020 but not yet enrolled, you may be able to buy one of these plans.
 - People new to Medicare are those who turn 65 on or after January 1, 2020, and those who get Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) on or after January 1, 2020.

In Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, Medigap policies are standardized in a different way. (See pages 42–44.) In some states, you may be able to buy another type of Medigap policy called [Medicare SELECT](#). Medicare SELECT plans are standardized plans that may require you to see certain providers and may cost less than other plans. (See page 20.)

This chart shows basic information about the different benefits that Medigap policies cover. If a percentage appears, the Medigap plan covers that percentage of the benefit, and you must pay the rest.

Benefits	Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) Plans									
	A	B	C	D	F*	G*	K	L	M	N
Medicare Part A coinsurance and hospital costs (up to an additional 365 days after Medicare benefits are used)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Medicare Part B coinsurance or copayment	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	75%	100%	100% ***
Blood (first 3 pints)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	75%	100%	100%
Part A hospice care coinsurance or copayment	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	75%	100%	100%
Skilled nursing facility care coinsurance			100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	75%	100%	100%
Part A deductible		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	50%	75%	50%	100%
Part B deductible			100%		100%					
Part B excess charges					100%	100%				
Foreign travel emergency (up to plan limits)			80%	80%	80%	80%			80%	80%
							Out-of-pocket limit in 2020**			
							\$5,880	\$2,940		

* Plans F and G also offer a high-deductible plan in some states. With this option, you must pay for Medicare-covered costs (coinsurance, copayments, and deductibles) up to the deductible amount of \$2,340 in 2020 before your policy pays anything. (Plans C and F won't be available to people who are newly eligible for Medicare on or after January 1, 2020.)

**For Plans K and L, after you meet your out-of-pocket yearly limit and your yearly Part B deductible (\$198 in 2020), the Medigap plan pays 100% of covered services for the rest of the calendar year.

*** Plan N pays 100% of the Part B coinsurance, except for a copayment of up to \$20 for some office visits and up to a \$50 copayment for emergency room visits that don't result in an inpatient admission.

What Medigap policies don't cover

Generally, Medigap policies don't cover long-term care (like non-skilled care you get in a nursing home), vision or dental care, hearing aids, eyeglasses, or private-duty nursing.

Types of coverage that are NOT Medigap policies

- [Medicare Advantage Plans \(also known as Part C\)](#), like an HMO or PPO
- [Medicare Prescription Drug Plans \(Part D\)](#)
- [Medicaid](#)
- Employer or union plans, including the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP)
- TRICARE
- Veterans' benefits
- Long-term care insurance policies
- Indian Health Service, Tribal, and Urban Indian Health plans
- Qualified Health Plans sold in the Health Insurance Marketplace

What types of Medigap policies can insurance companies sell?

In most cases, Medigap insurance companies can sell you only a “standardized” Medigap policy. All Medigap policies must have specific benefits, so you can compare them easily. If you live in Massachusetts, Minnesota, or Wisconsin, see pages 42–44.

Insurance companies that sell Medigap policies don't have to offer every Medigap plan. However, they must offer Plan A if they offer any Medigap policy.

If they offer any plan in addition to Plan A, they must also offer Plan C or Plan F. Each insurance company decides which Medigap plan it wants to sell, although state laws might affect which ones they offer.

In some cases, an insurance company must sell you a Medigap policy if you want one, even if you have health problems. Here are certain times that you're guaranteed the right to buy a Medigap policy:

- When you're in your [Medigap Open Enrollment Period](#). (See pages 14–15.)
- If you have a [guaranteed issue right](#). (See pages 21–23.)

You may be able to buy a Medigap policy at other times, but the insurance company can deny you a Medigap policy based on your health. Also, in some cases it may be illegal for the insurance company to sell you a Medigap policy (like if you already have Medicaid or a Medicare Advantage Plan).

Words in blue are defined on pages 49–50.

What do I need to know if I want to buy a Medigap policy?

- You must have Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance).
- If you have a [Medicare Advantage Plan](#) (like an HMO or PPO) but are planning to return to Original Medicare, you can apply for a Medigap policy before your coverage ends. The Medigap insurer can sell it to you as long as you're leaving the Plan. Ask that the new Medigap policy start when your Medicare Advantage Plan enrollment ends, so you'll have continuous coverage.
- You pay the private insurance company a [premium](#) for your Medigap policy in addition to the monthly Part B premium you pay to Medicare.
- A Medigap policy only covers one person. If you and your spouse both want Medigap coverage, **you each will have to buy separate Medigap policies.**
- When you have your [Medigap Open Enrollment Period](#), you can buy a Medigap policy from any insurance company that's licensed in your state.
- Any standardized Medigap policy is [guaranteed renewable](#) even if you have health problems. This means the insurance company can't cancel your Medigap policy as long as you stay enrolled and pay the premium.
- Different insurance companies may charge different premiums for the same exact policy. As you shop for a policy, be sure you're comparing the same policy (for example, compare Plan A from one company with Plan A from another company).
- Some states may have laws that may give you additional protections.
- Although some Medigap policies sold in the past covered prescription drugs, Medigap policies sold after January 1, 2006, aren't allowed to include prescription drug coverage. If you want prescription drug coverage, you can join a [Medicare Prescription Drug Plan \(Part D\)](#) offered by private companies approved by Medicare. (See pages 6–7.) To learn about Medicare prescription drug coverage, visit [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov), or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.

When's the best time to buy a Medigap policy?

The best time to buy a Medigap policy is during your **Medigap Open Enrollment Period**. This period lasts for 6 months and begins on the first day of the month in which you're both 65 or older and enrolled in Medicare Part B. Some states have additional Open Enrollment Periods including those for people under 65. During this period, an insurance company can't use **medical underwriting** to decide whether to accept your application. This means the insurance company can't do any of these because of your health problems:

- Refuse to sell you any Medigap policy it offers
- Charge you more for a Medigap policy than they charge someone with no health problems
- Make you wait for coverage to start (except as explained below)

While the insurance company can't make you wait for your coverage to start, it may be able to make you wait for coverage related to a pre-existing condition.

A pre-existing condition is a health problem you have before the date a new insurance policy starts. In some cases, the Medigap insurance company can refuse to cover your out-of-pocket costs for these pre-existing health problems for up to 6 months. This is called a "pre-existing condition waiting period." After 6 months, the Medigap policy will cover the pre-existing condition.

Coverage for a pre-existing condition can only be excluded if the condition was treated or diagnosed within 6 months before the coverage starts under the Medigap policy. This is called the "look-back period." Remember, for Medicare-covered services, Original Medicare will still cover the condition, even if the Medigap policy won't, but you're responsible for the Medicare **coinsurance** or **copayment**.

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are defined on
pages 49–50.