



MEDICARE

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When and How to Get Your Benefits

If you are already getting Social Security retirement or disability benefits, you will be contacted a few months before you become eligible for Medicare and given the information you need.

You will be enrolled in Medicare Parts A and B automatically. However, because you must pay a premium for Part B coverage, you have the option of turning it down.

If you are not already getting retirement benefits, you should contact the U.S. Social Security Administration about three months before your 65th birthday to sign up for Medicare. You can sign up for Medicare even if you do not plan to retire at age 65.

Once you are enrolled in Medicare, you will receive a Medicare card showing whether you have Part A, Part B or both. Keep your card in a safe place so you will have it when you need it.

You also will receive a "Medicare & You" handbook that describes your Medicare benefits and plan choices.

— Source: U.S. Social Security Administration



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Your Pregnancy Avoid Eating These Fish When You're Expecting

Seafood can be a great source of protein, and the omega-3 fatty acids in many fish can promote your baby's brain development. However, some fish and shellfish contain potentially dangerous levels of mercury. Too much mercury could damage your baby's developing nervous system.

The bigger and older the fish, the more mercury it's likely to contain. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency encourage pregnant women to avoid the following fish:

- Swordfish
- Shark
- King mackerel
- Tilefish

— Source: *The Mayo Clinic*

Hand Washing vs. Hand Sanitizer When Should I Use Each One?

Washing your hands with plain soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of germs on them. (Antibacterial soaps don't kill all the bacteria; they just slow its growth, which may lead to resistant bacteria.) If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can quickly reduce the number of germs on hands in some situations, but sanitizers do not eliminate all types of germs. Remember: hand

sanitizers are not effective when hands are visibly dirty.

How should you use hand sanitizer?

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub your hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry.

— Source: *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

SENIOR HEALTH UPDATE Being Inactive Can Be Risky



Although exercise and physical activity are among the healthiest things you can do for yourself, some older adults are reluctant to exercise. Some are afraid that exercise will be too hard or that physical activity will harm them. Others might think they have to join a gym or have special equipment.

Yet, studies show that "taking it easy" is risky. For the most part, when older people lose their ability to do things on their own, it's not just because they've aged. It's usually because they're not active.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health, inactive people are nearly twice as likely to develop heart

disease as those who are more active. Lack of physical activity also can lead to more visits to the doctor, more hospitalizations and more use of medicines for a variety of illnesses.

Talk with your doctor about what physical activities you can do to become more active. It may be as simple as taking a daily walk.

— Source: *National Institutes of Health*

Choosing Dietary Supplements? Talk with Your Doctor or Pharmacist

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) suggests that you talk with a health-care professional before using dietary supplements. Many contain ingredients with strong biological effects, and such products may not be safe for everyone. Here is the FDA's general advice:

- Dietary supplements are not intended to treat, diagnose, cure or alleviate the effects of diseases. They cannot completely prevent diseases. However, some are useful in reducing the risk of certain diseases and are authorized to make label claims about these uses. For example, folic-acid supplements may make a claim about reducing the risk of birth defects of the brain and spinal cord.
- Using supplements improperly can be harmful. Taking a combination of supplements, using these products together with medicine, or substituting them in place of prescribed medicines could lead to harmful, even life-threatening, results.

- Some supplements can have unwanted effects before, during or after surgery. For example, bleeding is a potential side-effect risk of garlic, ginkgo biloba, ginseng and vitamin E. Before surgery, you should inform your doctor about all the supplements you use.

— Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration



DID YOU KNOW?

Treating Flu Symptoms

In addition to taking any medications your doctor prescribes when you have the flu, you can also help yourself feel better by doing the following:

- Getting plenty of rest
- Drinking clear fluids such as water, broth, sports drinks or electrolyte beverages to prevent becoming dehydrated
- Placing a cool, damp washcloth on your forehead, arms and legs to reduce discomfort associated with a fever
- Putting a humidifier in your room to make breathing easier
- Gargling warm salt water to soothe a sore throat
- Covering up with a warm blanket to help calm chills

— Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



TRAVELING FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

Get a Good Night's Sleep in a Hotel with These Tips

If you are planning to travel to visit far-flung family this holiday season, you may be planning to stay in a hotel, rather than sleep on that lumpy sofa bed at Aunt Gloria's house one more time. But how do you help yourself have a good night's sleep away from home?

A sleeper-friendly hotel should have blackout shades installed and should provide bedside white-noise machines upon request. These machines electronically drown out any stray background noise. If you don't find one in your room, ask for one. (If there isn't one available, check out the free smartphone apps that offer white-noise options.) You can also request a room away from elevators to reduce sleep disturbances.

If you experience neck and back pain when traveling, ask what types of pillows the hotel provides to ensure that you can avoid extra stress in those areas. It's best to know in advance if the pillow option you need isn't available, because it may be best to bring your own. Don't be afraid to call the hotel, before you leave home, to ask.

— Source: National Sleep Foundation



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ROAST THAT HOLIDAY TURKEY

We often hear about food-related illnesses this time of year due to unsafe cooking practices when preparing things such as poultry. Here's how to cook your holiday turkey with food safety in mind.

- Set your oven temperature no lower than 325°F.
- Place your turkey on a rack in a shallow roasting pan.
- For optimum safety, stuffing a turkey is not recommended. For more even cooking of the turkey, cook your stuffing outside the bird in a casserole dish. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the stuffing. The stuffing must reach a minimum temperature of 165°F.
- If you choose to stuff your turkey, the ingredients can be prepared ahead of time. However, keep wet and dry ingredients separate. Chill all wet ingredients (butter/margarine, cooked

celery and onions, broth, etc.). Mix wet and dry ingredients just before filling the turkey cavities. Fill the cavities loosely. Cook the turkey immediately. Use a food thermometer to make sure the center of the stuffing reaches a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F.

- A whole turkey is safe when cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F as measured with a food thermometer. Check the temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast.
- For quality, let the turkey stand for 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to set. The turkey will carve more easily.
- Remove all stuffing from the turkey cavities.

— Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service

HEALTH TIP

**Report Drunk Drivers —
 for a Safer Holiday Season
 for All**

If you see a drunk driver this holiday season — or anytime — follow this advice from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

1. Call 911 and tell the dispatcher you wish to report a drunk driver. You don't have to give your name.
2. Give the exact location of the vehicle, including the name of the road or cross streets and the direction the vehicle is traveling.
3. Give a complete description of the vehicle (make, model, color and license plate).
4. Describe the manner in which the vehicle is being driven.
5. Do not follow or try to stop the car or detain the driver. Leave that to trained professionals.

— Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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