

# Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage: What It Means To You

(NAPSA)—The addition of a prescription drug benefit is the most significant change to Medicare since the program began. The benefit was implemented to meet the greater demand for prescription drug coverage and it will significantly enhance the benefits received by Medicare recipients.

There are many options for Medicare recipients with the new Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Cards. Here are some quick facts on how it will affect you:

## Why now?

Prescription drug use and cost have increased greatly in the years since the Medicare program began. Drugs now treat a greater number of diseases compared to a few decades ago when hospitalization and invasive surgery were the treatments of choice. When Medicare was implemented in 1965 there were so few drug treatments, there was less need to provide a prescription benefit. Today, however, the need for drug coverage is great.

## Dates to keep in mind:

- May 3, 2004: The date consumers begin signing up for the Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card
- June 1, 2004: The date eligible recipients begin using their Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card
- November 15-December 31st 2004: Annual Coordinated election period when members can change Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card if desired
- January 1, 2006: New Medicare drug benefit implemented

## How do the new Medicare cards work?

All Medicare beneficiaries who do not receive prescription benefits from Medicaid, are eligible to sign up for a Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card. Thirty-nine national card sponsors were



**Most Medicare recipients are now eligible to sign up for a Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Card.**

approved by Medicare to offer drug discount cards for use in community pharmacies, such as CVS/pharmacy. These cards, and others like them, will provide enrollees up to 40 percent off prescription drug costs and will cost no more than \$30 to enroll.

Consumers simply choose which card is best for their prescription needs and enroll in the program. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will verify eligibility, approve the application and notify the discount card program and member of the approval.

## Additional Benefits

Individuals whose incomes are not more than 135 percent of the federal poverty line, (\$12,123 for single individuals or \$16,362 for married individuals), are eligible for up to \$600 in additional benefits that can be applied toward prescription drug purchases and can have the enrollment fee waived.

The drug discount cards are intended to provide relief to seniors until the full Medicare drug program takes effect in January 2006. To learn more, visit [www.cvs.com](http://www.cvs.com), [www.nacds.com](http://www.nacds.com), or [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).