



Don't Miss Your Medicare Window

Turning 65 brings important enrollment deadlines. Missing them can trigger lifelong late-enrollment penalties. Higher income can also raise your Part B premium. Use this guide to protect yourself.

INITIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD — Your Best Window

A 7-month window that begins 3 months before the month you turn 65, includes your birthday month, and ends 3 months after. This is the cleanest time to enroll in Part A and Part B for most people and the surest way to avoid late penalties.

Still Working?

You may delay Part B without penalty if you (or your spouse) have current employer group coverage. Confirm with your benefits office that the coverage is considered creditable.

Special Enrollment

After employer coverage ends, you generally have an 8-month Special Enrollment Period to join Part B without a late penalty.

General Enrollment

January 1 – March 31 each year if you missed earlier windows. Coverage begins July 1, and a late penalty may apply.

PART A — Work Credits

Most people receive premium-free Part A once they (or a spouse) have earned 40 quarters — roughly 10 years — of Medicare-covered employment.

If you have fewer quarters (2026 rates):

- 30–39 quarters → \$311 per month
- Fewer than 30 → \$565 per month

LATE ENROLLMENT PENALTIES

Part B: Your premium increases by 10% for every full 12-month period you delayed without creditable coverage. This extra cost lasts as long as you have Part B.

Part D: 1% of the national base premium (\$38.99 in 2026) for each full month without creditable drug coverage (a gap of 63 days or longer). The penalty stays with you while you have Part D.

Higher Income? You May Pay More for Part B (IRMAA 2026)

Individual MAGI (2024 tax return)	Joint MAGI (2024 tax return)	2026 Part B Premium
≤ \$109,000	≤ \$218,000	\$202.90 (standard)
> \$109,000 – \$137,000	> \$218,000 – \$274,000	\$284.10
> \$137,000 – \$171,000	> \$274,000 – \$342,000	\$405.80
> \$171,000 – \$205,000	> \$342,000 – \$410,000	\$527.50
> \$205,000 – < \$500,000	> \$410,000 – < \$750,000	\$649.20
≥ \$500,000	≥ \$750,000	\$689.90

IRMAA uses a 2-year look-back (2026 premiums are based on your 2024 MAGI). About 8% of beneficiaries pay an income-related adjustment.

THE GOOD NEWS

If you have current employer (or spouse's employer) coverage that is considered creditable, you can usually delay Part B and Part D without penalty. We can help you verify your work credits, check possible IRMAA exposure, and choose the right enrollment path.