

Q. What happens if I don't take Part B as soon as I'm eligible?

A. If you do not enroll in Medicare Part B during your ***initial enrollment period**, you must wait for the general enrollment period (January 1- March 31 of each year) to enroll, and Part B coverage will begin the following July 1 of that year. If you wait 12 months or more, after first becoming eligible, your Part B premium will go up 10 percent for each 12 months that you could have had Part B but didn't take it. You will pay the extra 10 percent for as long as you have Part B.

If you didn't take Part B at age 65 because you were covered on an employer sponsored plan as an **active employee** (or you were covered under your spouse's group health insurance plan and he/she was an **active employee**, you may sign up for Part B (generally without an increased premium) within 8 months from the time you or your spouse stop working or are no longer covered by the group plan. You also can sign up at any time while the group plan covers you.

The timeframe to avoid the Part B Penalty DOES NOT apply if you are already retired and coming off of a “retiree plan”.

One often overlooked reason to enroll into Part B when first eligible at age 65 is the opportunity to enroll in a Medicare Advantage Plan for little or no monthly premium in most areas. You must be enrolled in Part A and B to join a Medicare Advantage plan.

Medicare Advantage might significantly reduce your out-of-pocket costs when compared to your group plan.

***initial enrollment period**: If you're eligible for Medicare when you turn 65, you can sign up during the 7-month period that:

- Begins 3 months before the month you turn 65
- Includes the month you turn 65
- Ends 3 months after the month you turn 65