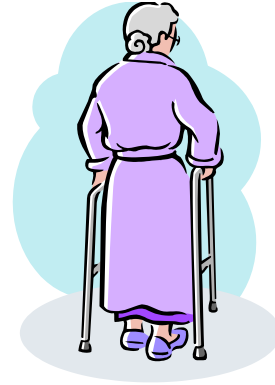


Medicare Fraud



For Seniors and their caregivers

Most doctors, health care providers, suppliers, and private companies who work with Medicare are honest. However, there are a few who aren't. Medicare is trying harder than ever to find and prevent fraud and abuse by working more closely with health care providers and recipients of services. Whenever you receive a payment notice from Medicare, review it for errors. The document should clearly demonstrate what Medicare was billed for, what Medicare paid, and what (if anything) is owed. Make sure **Medicare wasn't billed for health care services or medical supplies and equipment you did not receive.** Other types of fraud might not be so easy to spot; however, be suspicious of doctors, health care providers, or suppliers that tell you the following:

- The equipment or service is free; it will not cost you anything, and they only need your Medicare number for their records
- Medicare wants you to have the item or service
- They know how to get Medicare to pay for the item or service
- The more tests they provide, the cheaper the tests become
- Be suspicious of doctors or plans that do the following:
- Don't charge copayments without checking on your ability to pay
- Advertise "free" consultations to people with Medicare
- Claim they represent Medicare or a branch of the Federal government
- Use pressure or scare tactics to sell you high-priced medical services or diagnostic tests

- Bill Medicare for services you didn't get
- Use telephone calls and door-to-door selling as marketing tools
- Offer non-medical transportation or housekeeping as Medicare-approved services
- Ask you to contact your doctor and ask for a service or supplies that you don't need
- Bill Medicare for a power wheelchair or scooter when you don't meet Medicare's qualifications
- Put the wrong diagnosis on the claim so Medicare will pay

TIPS TO HELP PREVENT MEDICARE FRAUD

Do's

DO protect your Medicare number (on your Medicare card). Treat your Medicare card like it is a credit card. Don't ever give it out except to your doctor or other Medicare provider. Never give your Medicare or Medicaid number in exchange for free medical equipment or any other free offer. Dishonest providers will use your numbers to get payment for services they never delivered.

DO remember that nothing is ever "free." Don't accept offers of money or gifts for free medical care.

DO educate yourself about Medicare. Know your rights and know what a provider can and cannot bill to Medicare.

DO use a calendar to record all of your doctors' appointments and what tests or X-rays you get. Then check your Medicare statements carefully to make sure you received each service listed and that all the details are correct.

DO be cautious of any provider or plan representative who says he has been approved by the Federal government.

DO be wary of providers who tell you that the item or service isn't usually covered, but they "know how to bill Medicare" so Medicare will pay.

DO make sure you understand how a plan works before you join.

DO always check your pills before you leave the pharmacy to be sure you received the full amount. If you don't receive your full prescription, report the problem to the pharmacist.

DO review your Medicare payment notice for errors. The payment notice shows what services or supplies were billed to Medicare, what Medicare paid, and what you owe. Make sure Medicare wasn't billed for health care services or medical supplies and equipment you didn't receive. If you spend time in a hospital, make sure the admission date, discharge date, and diagnosis are correct.

DON'Ts

DON'T allow anyone, except your doctor or other Medicare providers, to review your medical records or recommend services.

DON'T contact your doctor to request a service that you do not need. Do not let anyone persuade you to see a doctor for care or services you do not need.

DON'T accept medical supplies from a door-to-door salesman. If someone comes to your door claiming to be from Medicare or Medicaid, remember that Medicare and Medicaid do not send representatives to your home.

DON'T be influenced by certain media advertising about your health. Many television and radio ads do not have your best interests at heart.

If you suspect errors or have concerns about your Medicare payment notices and suspect fraud, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE. Information about what Medicare will and won't pay for is available in the "Medicare and You" handbook. To obtain a copy, you can call 1-800-MEDICARE or visit www.medicare.gov/Publications/pubs/pdf/10050.pdf .

Information in this article was obtained from "Protecting Medicare and You From Fraud," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Crime Bites
Fridley Police Department
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