

## **Fight Fraud by Guarding Your Medicare Number**

(Drop-in Article 9/22/16 -- FINAL)

Health care fraud drives up costs for everyone in the health care system. One way to protect against such fraud is to **guard your Medicare number**. Fraud schemes often depend on identity thieves getting hold of people's Medicare numbers, so treat your number as you would a credit card.

Follow these important steps to protect yourself from fraud:

- Don't share your Medicare number or other personal information with anyone who contacts you by telephone, email, or by approaching you in person, unless you've given them permission in advance. Medicare will NEVER contact you for your Medicare number or other personal information.
- Tell your friends and neighbors to guard their Medicare number.
- Don't ever let anyone borrow or pay to use your Medicare number.
- Review your Medicare Summary Notice to be sure you and Medicare are only being charged for actual services.
- Be wary of salespeople who knock on your door or call you uninvited and try to sell you a product or service.
- Don't accept items received through the mail that you didn't order. You should refuse the delivery and/or return it to the sender. Keep a record of the sender's name and the date you returned the items.

And if you're looking to enroll in a Medicare plan:

- Be suspicious of anyone who contacts you about Medicare plans unless you gave them permission.
- There are no "early bird discounts" or "limited time offers."
- Don't let anyone rush you to enroll by claiming you need to "act now for the best deal."
- Be skeptical of free gifts, free medical services, discount packages or any offer that sounds "too good to be true" – especially if you need to hand over your Medicare number in order to receive these items or deals. Decline politely but firmly.
- By law, any promotional items you're offered to enroll in a plan must be worth no more than \$15, and these items can't be given on the condition that you enroll in a plan.

Call 1-800-MEDICARE to report suspected fraud. Learn more about protecting yourself from health care fraud by visiting [www.Medicare.gov/fraud](http://www.Medicare.gov/fraud) or by contacting your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP). To find the SMP in your state, go to the SMP Locator at [www.smpresource.org](http://www.smpresource.org).

*This information prepared by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

###