

New Yorkers can expect new Medicare cards starting in June

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This image provided by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services shows what the new Medicare cards will look like. The cards are getting a makeover to fight identity theft. No more Social Security numbers will be placed on the card. In April, Medicare will begin mailing every beneficiary a new card with a unique new number to identify them. (Photo: Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services via AP)

Medicare will begin rolling out new cards in April, and **eligible New Yorkers can expect theirs beginning in June.**

Meanwhile, scammers are way ahead of everyone.

Seniors already are getting telephone calls from people claiming to be from Medicare. Some callers may say that they need your current Medicare number — which is the Social Security number — to issue the new card. Others may say that you need a temporary card, which they supply for a fee and will need bank account or credit card information to process the transaction.

Hang up, said Gabriel Geiger, director of financial services for Lifespan of Greater Rochester. The nonprofit agency provides nonmedical information to older adults and their caregivers.

“Medicare never calls,” he said.

No one is immune from scammers trying to get Social Security numbers or other personal information.

Geiger said the spouse of an employee at Lifespan received a call claiming to be about the person's health center. The person asked the caller to identify the health center.

“People are getting very creative,” Geiger said.

[Medicare is changing from Social Security numbers to random numbers and letters called a Medicare Beneficiary Identifier.](#) The move is an effort to reduce identity theft and Medicare fraud.

“We get so many phone calls,” said Ken Carl of East Rochester. “If you get one from someone saying they’re from Medicare, you might say this isn’t an ordinary phone call ... and you might be tempted to listen because it sounds official.”

Carl, who has received and forwarded emails relating to the scam, said he has not gotten a call. “I think I would be wise enough to catch it, but you never know.”

Distribution of the new cards is happening by region.

[People who receive Medicare benefits don't have to do a thing.](#) Geiger said. Even if you don't have the new card when you need care, doctor offices are able to process the claims during the transition.

Once you get your new Medicare card, cut up or otherwise destroy your old Medicare card. For people with Medicare Advantage, the ID card for the plan is the main card for Medicare. So keep that card and continue to use it. But you may be asked also to show your new Medicare card, so carry it with you.

If you're turning 65, you need to [contact Medicare three months before your birthday](#) to start the process. The rest of the correspondence will be via mail.

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Be alert to scams

Being told you need to give you current Medicare number to get a new card is only one Medicare scam.

Gabriel Geiger, director of financial services for Lifespan of Greater Rochester, warns of other attempts:

- Getting a call about coming to a provider for tests or procedures.
- Mobile diagnostic labs giving needless or fake tests and then billing for expensive procedures.

Geiger said Medicare beneficiaries need to review bills and summary of care, and check to make sure the name of the doctor, the location and the medical service is correct.

If you suspect fraud, contact the Senior Medicare Patrol at (877) 678-4697.

For group presentations call the Senior Medicare Patrol at Lifespan at (585) 244-8400. Presentations are available in Monroe, Ontario, Wayne, Genesee and Livingston counties.

Tell your friends

New Medicare cards will be mailed region by region. Here's the schedule so you can watch your mailbox.

April-June 2018: Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Alaska, American Samoa, California, Guam, Hawaii, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon.

After June: All remaining states and territories.

For more information about Medicare, including how to sign up, go to medicare.gov.

Lifespan also offers Medicare 101 sessions. Call (585) 244-8400 for more.