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New Medicare Cards Are Being Mailed – Here's What You Need to Know

It's no secret that the valuable red, white and blue Medicare cards have a serious flaw: they carry an identification number that, in most cases, is the beneficiary's Social Security number. That puts people with Medicare at risk of fraud and identity theft.

Between April 2018 and April 2019, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is mailing new cards to all people with Medicare. CMS is expected to mail them to Illinois recipients after June of this year, while everyone new to Medicare will receive the new card when they enroll. The new cards will have a new, unique Medicare Number instead of a Social Security Number to help reduce the risk of fraud and identity theft.

But ever-resourceful scammers and fraudsters are using news about new cards to try to trick people into giving up their information and, often, their money.

The Illinois Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program, located at AgeOptions, encourages personal responsibility for protecting against health care fraud and is involved in the national campaign to inform Medicare recipients about the new cards.

Peggy Tully, AgeOptions Health Care and Fraud Information specialist, says there are several things Medicare beneficiaries should know about the new cards:

- If you haven't received your new card by **April 2019** contact the Social Security Administration at (800)772-1213.

- Make sure SSA has your correct address so you'll receive your new card. They have your address if you're receiving Medicare Summary Notices.
- Create [My Medicare](#) and [My Social Security](#) accounts to ensure both agencies have accurate information.
- Medicare and SSA will not call and ask you to verify your personal information in order to receive your card. They already have it. Scammers and fraudsters do that.
- There is no cost to receive a new card. Only scammers will ask for money.
- Medicare and Social Security will not cancel your benefits if you don't comply with a request for information or money. That's a scam.

While new Medicare cards will have a random number instead of a Social Security number, Peggy urges all beneficiaries to protect their cards and share their numbers only with trusted health care providers. "The new numbers will reduce the potential for ID theft, but scammers can use your number to bill Medicare and that could mean you will lose benefits," she says. "If a scammer uses your number to bill Medicare for a back brace, for example, and later you actually need a back brace Medicare could deny it."

If you think you've received a scam call or have given information to someone who may be a scammer, call AgeOptions at (708)383-0258 and we will help you determine what to do.