MEDICARE RIGHTS CENTER
Getting Medicare right

National Council on Aging

Differences between Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage

	Original Medicare	Medicare Advantage
Costs	Medicare premiums (Part B; Part A if applicable), deductibles, and coinsurance charges (usually 20% of Medicare-approved cost for outpatient care)	Medicare premiums, plan premium (if it has one), deductibles (if it has one), and copays (usually a fixed cost for office visits)
Supplemental insurance	Beneficiary **can purchase** a Medigap policy.	Beneficiary **cannot purchase** a Medigap policy.
Covers extra services	**No.** Covers medically necessary inpatient and outpatient health care. Does not cover services such as routine vision, hearing, or dental care.	**Maybe**. May cover some services Original Medicare does not cover, such as routine vision, hearing, and dental care.
Lets beneficiary see providers nationwide	**Yes**. Beneficiary can go to any provider who accepts Original Medicare.	**Usually not.** Many plans have a network of providers in the beneficiary's geographic area and may not cover care if a beneficiary sees a provider out-of-network, except in emergencies.
Referral required to see specialist	**No.**	**Maybe.** A beneficiary's plan may require a referral from a primary care physician before it will cover a visit to a specialist.
Drug coverage	**No**. if beneficiary wants Medicare prescription drug coverage, they can buy a stand-alone Part D plan provided by a private insurance company.	**Usually**. Most plans include prescription drug coverage.
Out-of-pocket limit	**No**. There is no limit on what a beneficiary can spend on health care.	**Yes**. Plans must have annual out-of-pocket limit on cost-sharing. Once a beneficiary meets the limit, they do not owe anything out-of-pocket for their health care services. The limit is high, but can protect a beneficiary who needs expensive care.

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