



## News & Views / November 2019

[www.pfpg.com](http://www.pfpg.com)

**In this issue: Medicare reminders, specifically for the single, TD Ameritrade cuts commissions, travel tips**

### Medicare reminders

Medicare's open enrollment period is Oct. 15 – Dec. 7. During this time, you can switch to a new Medicare Part D prescription drug plan, join a Medicare Advantage plan, or drop a Medicare Advantage plan and enroll in original Medicare. Any change you make will be effective Jan. 1, 2020.

For those in Medicare Advantage plans, your opportunity to make a change is Jan. 1 – Mar. 31 each year, when you can switch Advantage plans, or return to original Medicare (including purchasing a Part D plan). One change per year is permitted, with changes becoming effective the following month after the request is received.

For those new to Medicare, Medigap Plans C and F will no longer be available starting on Jan. 1, 2020. But if you're already enrolled in either, you can keep your plan.

Also, take note that although Advantage plans may offer additional benefits that Medicare doesn't cover, and are generally less expensive, access may be restricted to in-network providers. Thus they are not necessarily the best choice for snowbirds or those who travel frequently. However, in 2020 some plans will offer new benefits for chronically ill enrollees (e.g. care services, meal delivery, transportation), and they may find Medicare Advantage to be to their advantage.

Part D drug coverage is expected to drop by 13.5% for a new average premium of \$30/month. Be sure to update your current medications and dosages when evaluating plans.

For comparison shopping for all Medicare-related plans, look at the government's recently redesigned Medicare [Plan Finder](#) site. For further assistance, contact your local State Health Insurance Assistance Program ([SHIP](#)) to find a free trained health insurance counselor.

### Specifically for the single

Whether someone is single by choice, through a divorce, or widowed, planning for retirement and aging present different challenges from those that couples face. The best plans are those that rely on proactive communication to build a support network, according to Kiplinger's recent article "[Planning for Retirement as a Single Person.](#)" For those without children, or whose children may be far away or estranged, such a network is vital.

Begin by identifying who you can count to be there: extended family, good friends, caregiving agencies, social groups, and professional advisors. Designate who might be best suited and able to assist you with financial and medical advice, and transportation needs. A friend or relative might be willing to help with shopping or doctor trips if you're incapacitated, but you won't know (and neither will they) unless you have the conversation well beforehand. Update your support list as needed.

If you plan to remain in your home, make changes that will make it comfortable and safe should your health decline. If a retirement community isn't for you, but you are open to the idea of shared

housing or a communal style of living, check out [nationalsharedhousing.org](http://nationalsharedhousing.org) (resources only available for some states) or look into “cohousing” in your area. If staying in your home becomes impractical, consider now how you might pay for in-home health care or nursing home care – and then evaluate long term care insurance plans if you’re young enough and healthy enough to afford the premiums.

Talk to your financial advisor about preparing an adequate cash safety net, maximizing your retirement benefits if you’re still employed, and determining the best strategies for income taxes and Social Security benefits. And make sure your estate plan is up to date, and the relevant information available to those who need to access it. PFPG has prepared a letter of instruction template for our clients listing the information to assemble.

On the brighter side, having your network in place will help you feel more secure and sleep better at night – and that will definitely have a positive effect on your well-being!

## TD Ameritrade cuts commissions

Good news for TD Ameritrade account holders: as of Oct. 3, TDA has eliminated commissions for online trades of exchange-listed US stocks and US and Canadian ETFs (formerly \$6.95 per trade). Rates will be effective for TD Ameritrade retail clients, as well as clients of independent registered investment advisors (such as PFPG) that utilize TD Ameritrade Institutional.

## Travel tips

A recent *New York Times* article, [“8 Tips for Hotels, from a Hotel Guest.”](#) was directed at hotels in order to make their guests’ stays more pleasant. Here are some ways you can make your hotel stay more pleasant until hotels follow the article’s suggestions:

1. Make sure you ask whether you are getting the best possible room in your price category. If matters such as quiet location, good view, etc., are important to you, confirm it at the time you make your reservation. If you don’t like what you get, you’ll have more leverage.
2. Ask at the desk if you can get a TV channel list if one isn’t provided in the room.
3. Available racks and shelves for toiletries can be small or nonexistent, especially in showers. A mesh toiletry bag with an S hook that you can hang in the shower/bath can be helpful.
4. Plastic hangers are handy for drying hand laundry or wet swimsuits.
5. A night light can prevent unexpected bumps when navigating your way to the bathroom.
6. Traveling to Europe? Bring a washcloth or body sponge in a plastic bag, since washcloths are often not provided.
7. Grab bars and non-slippery bathtubs are not universal. A pair of water shoes from a sporting goods store can provide some traction.
8. If keeping your hair dry in the shower is a concern, bring your own shower cap. The caps provided by hotels are usually flimsy at best.
9. Bring along a list of your comfort items so you remember them all when you leave!

Enjoy the rest of autumn,



Brian L. Dietz, CFP®, CFA  
Debra Yoo, Director of Client Services

Portland Financial Planning Group LLC | 511 Congress St., Suite 804, Portland, ME 04101

Information contained in this newsletter does not serve as the receipt of, or as a substitute for, personalized investment advice from Portland Financial Planning Group LLC. At any time you may request a copy of our current written disclosure discussing PFPG’s services and fees.