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Talking with a Friend or Family Member's Doctor During an Office Visit

If you help someone with Medicare, you may need to talk to a doctor or other health care provider about your friend or family member's condition and/or treatment plan during an office visit. For example, the person you help may become nervous or upset during the doctor visit. Or, you might have questions about his or her care. In these cases, it may be easier for you to talk to the doctor alone.

Am I able to talk with a doctor about the person I'm helping?

The doctor must ask for permission from the person you're helping. As long as the person you're helping gives permission, the doctor can talk to you about his or her care. Check with the doctor's office for more information.

Will Medicare help pay if I talk to the doctor alone?

Yes, as long as your friend or family member gives permission for the doctor to talk to you about his or her medical condition. During a face-to-face, medically necessary office visit, your friend or family member's doctor can spend time talking with you about the condition and/or treatment plan, even if your friend or family member isn't in the room. The Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) office visit payment includes the time that the doctor spends talking with you. This means that the doctor can't bill Medicare or your friend or family member separately for the time you talked.

Where can I get Medicare information?

- **Medicare.gov**

Visit Medicare.gov to help the person you're caring for find out what Medicare covers, choose a Medicare health or drug plan, compare nursing homes, get help with billing, find local resources, and more.

- **MyMedicare.gov**

Visit MyMedicare.gov to help your friend or family member access his or her personal Medicare information. MyMedicare.gov is available 24 hours a day, every day. You may need to help the person you're caring for register on the website, and ask for his or her permission to use it.

Where can I get Medicare information? (continued)

- **State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)**

Get personalized help from your local SHIP counselor for billing questions, Medicare plan choices, help with complaints or appeals, and more. Visit shiptacenter.org, or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to get your SHIP's phone number. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.

- **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)**

Get Medicare information 24 hours a day, every day. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. Have your friend or family member's Medicare card ready so you can enter his or her Medicare number.

Important: Medicare can't give you personal health information unless the person you're caring for gives verbal permission while you're on the phone or has submitted written authorization. It's a good idea to fill out the authorization form in advance. Visit Medicare.gov/forms-help-resources/medicare-forms to help your friend or family member complete the "Authorization to Disclose Personal Health Information form" in one of two ways:

1. Help the person you're caring for fill out and submit the form online.
If you choose this option, you can immediately call and talk on behalf of your friend or family member. If you need help completing the form online, call 1-800-MEDICARE, and ask for help submitting the form electronically while on the phone.
2. Download, print, and help the person you're caring for complete the form. Mail the completed, signed form to the mailing address on the form.
If you choose this option, you'll generally need to wait a few weeks before you're able to call and talk on your friend or family member's behalf. You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE, and ask for help filling out the form over the phone. The customer service representative will mail the completed form to your friend or family member to sign and return.

You have the right to get Medicare information in an accessible format, like large print, Braille, or audio. You also have the right to file a complaint if you feel you've been discriminated against. Visit Medicare.gov/about-us/accessibility-nondiscrimination-notice, or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) for more information. TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.

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