

Be a Wise Consumer

Assess your needs.

Review your own health profile and decide what benefits and services you are most likely to need. Using the worksheet at the end of this booklet, make a careful comparison to avoid mistakes. If a poor decision is made, you may have more limited choices in the future.

Buy just ONE.

You only need one good Medicare supplement policy. You are paying for unnecessary duplication if you own more than one.

Take your time.

Do not be pressured into buying a policy. If you have questions or concerns, ask the agent to explain the policy to a friend or relative whose judgement you trust, or call the SHIP program. If you need more time, tell the agent to return at some future date. Do not fall for the age-old excuse, "I'm only going to be in town today so you'd better buy now." Show the agent to the door!

Check the agent's insurance license.

An agent must have a license issued by the state of Oklahoma to be authorized to sell insurance in Oklahoma. Do not buy from a person who cannot show proof of licensing. A business card is not a license. You can contact the Oklahoma Insurance Department to check on an agent's license.

Read the outline of coverage.

The outline of coverage, which is required to be delivered with every solicitation for Medicare supplement insurance, includes specific details about each of the benefits in the policy. If purchased by direct mail, your outline of coverage must be delivered with the policy.

Medical questions may be important.

Do not be misled by the phrase "no medical examination required." You may not have to go to a physician for an exam, but medical statements you make on the application might prevent you from getting coverage after your open enrollment period.

DO NOT pay with cash.

Pay by check, money order, or bank draft. Make it payable to the insurance company only, not the agent. Completely fill in the check before presenting it to the agent.

Complete the application carefully.

Before you sign an application, read the health information recorded by the agent. Do not sign it until all health information is completed and accurate. If you leave out requested medical information, the insurance company could deny coverage for that condition or cancel your policy.

Approval takes time.

You may not be insured by a new Medicare supplement policy on the day you apply for it. Generally, approval takes 10 to 30 days.

Do not cancel a current policy...

until you have been accepted by the new insurer and have a policy in hand. Consider carefully whether you want to drop one policy and purchase another.

Expect to receive the policy within a reasonable time.

A policy should be delivered within a reasonable time after application (usually 30 days). If you have not received the policy or had your check returned in that time, contact the company and obtain in writing a reason for delay. If a problem continues, contact the Oklahoma Insurance Department.

Use your 30-day free look period. The 30 days start when you have a policy in your hand. Review it carefully. If you decide not to keep it, return it to the company and request a premium refund. After the "free-look" period, insurance companies are not required to return unused premiums if you decide to drop the policy. If an agent tries to sell you a new policy saying you can get a premium refund for your current policy, report the agent to the Oklahoma Insurance Department.

Your policy is guaranteed renewable if you bought it after December 13, 1991.

That means the company cannot drop you as a policyholder unless you fail to pay the premium.