



THE RETIREMENT REPORT

Monthly Medicare & Retirement Planning Newsletter



Thriving in Retirement: Mind, Body, and Peace of Mind

By Anne de Leon



May is Mental Health Awareness Month, serving as a timely reminder that nurturing our emotional well-being is just as important as caring for our physical health—especially during retirement and important life transitions

Retirement brings new freedoms, but it can also bring change, uncertainty, and questions about the road ahead. This stage of life invites us to slow down, reflect, and intentionally focus on what helps us feel secure, connected, and fulfilled. Good mental health isn't about avoiding challenges; it's about having the tools, support, and flexibility to navigate them with confidence.

In this month's newsletter, we explore topics designed to support your overall well-being—from maintaining mental and emotional balance in retirement to understanding important updates that may affect your financial peace of mind. You'll find practical insights, thoughtful guidance, and information to help you make informed decisions and feel more at ease in the years ahead.

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Hurry to Sign Up for the 2026 Medicare Prescription Payment Plan

If you're enrolled in Medicare Part D and facing high prescription drug costs, there's good news—but timing matters. A relatively new federal program, the Medicare Prescription Payment Plan, can help make expensive medications more manageable by spreading your out-of-pocket costs over the year instead of paying large sums all at once.

What Is the Medicare Prescription Payment Plan?

Launched in 2025, the Medicare Prescription Payment Plan (MPPP) allows people enrolled in Medicare Part D—either through a stand-alone prescription drug plan or a Medicare Advantage plan with drug coverage—to pay their out-of-pocket drug costs in monthly installments. Instead of paying a large amount at the pharmacy counter, your prescription drug plan bills you directly each month. There's no interest, no extra fees, and no credit check.

For example, in 2026, the Part D out-of-pocket maximum is \$2,100. If you enroll early in the year, that total cost could be spread out to roughly \$175 per month. Even if you enroll later, the plan still allows you to divide the remaining balance across the months left in the year.

Why Enrolling Early Matters

You can sign up for the program at any point during the year, but enrolling sooner gives you more months to spread out payments, which means smaller monthly bills.

This option is especially helpful for:

- People with high prescription costs early in the year
- Those who don't qualify for Medicare's Extra Help program
- Individuals managing chronic or serious conditions requiring expensive medications

Health researchers note that many Medicare beneficiaries struggle to afford large upfront drug costs, which leads some to delay or skip medications altogether. The payment plan was designed to help prevent those gaps in care.

How the Payment Plan Works

Once you're enrolled:

- You won't pay for medications at the pharmacy when you pick them up
- Your drug plan sends you a monthly statement instead
- Monthly bills may change if your medications change, but your total annual cost will not exceed what you would have paid without the plan

It's important to know that this payment plan does not reduce the cost of your drugs—it simply helps you budget them more evenly throughout the year.

How to Sign Up

Although pharmacies are required to notify you when your drug costs reach a certain level, you cannot enroll at the pharmacy counter. To join the Medicare Prescription Payment Plan, you must:

- Contact your Part D plan directly by phone, or
- Enroll through your plan's website

Medicare.gov also offers an interactive tool that helps you decide whether this payment option makes sense for your situation.

Current Annuity Rates May 2026

6.45%

3 Year Fixed Annuity

6.00%

5 Year Fixed Annuity

*To find out more,
contact me: 314-287-0179*

Medicare Prescription Payment Plan cont'd...

Why Awareness Is Still Low

Despite the benefits, enrollment in the program remains lower than expected. Many people simply aren't aware the option exists, and others find the enrollment process confusing. Surveys show that while awareness has improved, many beneficiaries still don't fully understand how the plan works or whether it applies to them.

What If You Fall Behind on Payments?

If you miss payments and fall more than two months behind, you could be removed from the payment plan. However:

- You would still remain enrolled in your Part D plan
- Once overdue balances are paid, you can rejoin the payment plan by contacting your drug plan

Staying in touch with your plan and reviewing your monthly statements can help you stay on track.

Is the Plan Right for Everyone?

Not necessarily. If your prescription costs are low or manageable, or if you enroll late in the year with only a few months left to spread payments, the benefit may be limited. But for many retirees on fixed incomes, the payment plan can offer valuable financial breathing room.

A Helpful Option Worth Exploring

Prescription drug costs are a major concern for many retirees, and while the Medicare Prescription Payment Plan isn't perfect, it can be a useful budgeting tool for those with higher expenses. If you expect significant Part D costs in 2026, it may be worth contacting your drug plan soon to learn more and determine if enrolling is right for you.

Could Social Security Benefits Be Capped for High-Earning Couples?

Some high-earning married couples are now receiving \$100,000 a year—or more—in Social Security retirement benefits, according to new research. A policy proposal aimed at strengthening Social Security's long-term finances suggests placing limits on those highest benefit amounts.

Why Is This Being Discussed Now?

Social Security is facing a funding challenge in the coming decade. According to the Social Security Administration, the trust fund that helps pay retirement benefits could be depleted by 2032. If no changes are made, incoming payroll taxes would cover only a portion of scheduled benefits. "There's basically a trust fund crisis on the near horizon," says Marc Goldwein, senior policy director at the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (CRFB), a nonpartisan think tank that studies federal finances.



Could Social Security Benefits Be Capped cont'd...

How Do Some Couples Reach Six-Figure Benefits?

Social Security benefits are based on earnings over a worker's highest 35 years, up to a yearly income cap. In 2026, wages up to \$184,500 are subject to Social Security payroll taxes. Couples in which both spouses earned at or above that cap for at least 35 years and begin collecting benefits at full retirement age (typically between ages 66 and 67) qualify for the highest payouts. According to CRFB estimates, such couples can now receive about \$100,000 or more annually in combined Social Security benefits. While this group represents only a small fraction of beneficiaries today, about 1 million individuals currently receive \$50,000 a year or more from Social Security. When two such individuals are married, their combined benefits can exceed six figures.



What Is the Proposed Cap?

To help slow benefit growth at the top and improve Social Security's finances, CRFB proposes a "six-figure limit" on benefits:

- \$50,000 per year for individuals
- \$100,000 per year for married couples

The cap would apply to benefits claimed at full retirement age and would be adjusted if someone claims earlier or later. For example:

- Couples who delay benefits until age 70 could have a higher limit (around \$124,000)
- Those who claim early at age 62 would face a lower cap (about \$70,000)

The proposal also includes indexing the cap over time, such as adjusting it for inflation. CRFB estimates that indexing the cap to inflation alone could save \$100 billion over 10 years and close roughly one-fifth of Social Security's long-term funding gap.

Support and Concerns

Supporters argue that Social Security was designed to provide a basic level of retirement security—not six-figure annual benefits—especially at a time when the program faces financial strain. "An income security program meant to keep seniors out of poverty shouldn't be paying six figures when it can't afford to pay everyone their full benefits," Goldwein said.

However, critics worry the proposal could lead to broader benefit cuts over time. Nancy Altman, president of Social Security Works, warned that a cap could eventually affect more people, including middle-income earners, especially in higher-cost areas.

AARP has also expressed concern. In a statement, Jenn Jones, AARP's vice president for financial security, said proposals focused on capping benefits risk becoming "a backdoor to broader cuts," rather than ensuring workers receive the benefits they earned.

What Could Happen Next?

Lawmakers have many options to strengthen Social Security, including raising revenue, adjusting benefits, or combining both approaches. Surveys show that most Americans support a balanced solution—one that includes additional funding as well as targeted changes. Whether or not this specific proposal moves forward, experts agree it adds momentum to an overdue conversation about Social Security's future.

May Is Mental Health Awareness Month

Retirement is one of life's most meaningful transitions. After years of schedules, responsibilities, and routines, this new phase opens the door to freedom, flexibility, and fresh opportunities. At the same time, it can bring unexpected emotional changes. As we recognize Mental Health Awareness Month this May, it's a good time to reflect on how retirement affects not just our finances—but our mental and emotional well-being, too.

Understanding the Retirement Transition

Leaving the workforce is a major life change. It's perfectly normal to experience a mix of emotions as you settle into retirement. Many people feel excitement and relief, while others may notice moments of uncertainty, sadness, or anxiety. Your work may have shaped your identity for decades, so adjusting to a new rhythm of life takes time—and that's okay.



Why Mental Well-Being Matters in Retirement

Mental well-being isn't just about avoiding stress or illness. It's about feeling connected, purposeful, and engaged with life. Your emotional health plays a powerful role in how fulfilling your retirement years can be. When mental wellness is nurtured, retirees often feel more positive, resilient, and energized to enjoy this stage of life.

Rediscovering Purpose

During working years, purpose often comes from careers, family responsibilities, or daily obligations. Retirement offers a valuable opportunity to redefine what gives your life meaning. This could be learning something new, giving back to your community, or simply enjoying slower mornings and creative pursuits. Finding purpose doesn't have to be grand—it just needs to feel meaningful to you.

Staying Social and Connected

Strong social connections are one of the most important contributors to mental well-being in retirement. Regular interaction with others helps foster a sense of belonging and emotional support, while isolation can make it harder to stay positive. Consider ways to stay connected, such as:

- Joining community groups or clubs
- Volunteering for causes you care about
- Reconnecting with old friends or building new friendships

Even small, consistent interactions can make a big difference.

Supporting Your Mental Health in Retirement

There are many ways to care for your mental well-being during retirement. Some simple yet powerful approaches include:

Exploring Hobbies and Passions

With more free time, retirement is the perfect chance to revisit old interests or discover new ones. Whether it's gardening, painting, traveling, music, or learning a new skill, engaging in activities you enjoy can boost your mood and provide a strong sense of fulfillment.

Prioritizing Physical Health

Movement plays a key role in emotional wellness. Regular physical activity releases endorphins that naturally improve mood and reduce stress. It also offers opportunities to socialize and maintain independence confidently.

May Is Mental Health Awareness cont'd...

Ideas to stay active include:

- Walking or hiking
- Yoga or pilates classes
- Swimming or water aerobics
- Cycling or group fitness activities



Practicing Mindfulness

Mindfulness techniques can help you manage stress, stay present, and feel more grounded. Popular practices include:

- Meditation, which promotes calm, focus, and emotional balance
- Deep breathing, a simple way to relax the body and mind
- Progressive muscle relaxation, which helps release physical tension and encourages relaxation

These practices are easy to learn and can be incorporated into daily routines.

Adapting to Change With Confidence

Retirement naturally comes with uncertainties—changes in routine, health concerns, or shifting family roles. Developing healthy coping skills makes it easier to adapt. Staying flexible, maintaining a sense of humor, creating gentle routines, and focusing on what you can control can all help support a healthy, long-term resilience.

Knowing When to Seek Support

If the emotional side of retirement ever feels overwhelming, reaching out for support is a sign of strength. Talking with a counselor, participating in group discussions, or connecting with community resources can provide reassurance and a fresh perspective. You don't have to navigate this phase alone.

Balancing Independence and Support

One of the joys of retirement is independence—but support from family, friends, and community remains important. Finding a balance between self-reliance and connection allows you to enjoy freedom while knowing help is there when needed.

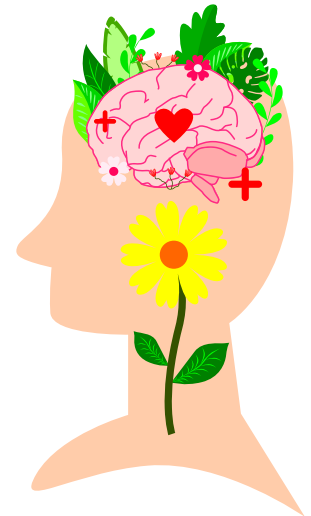
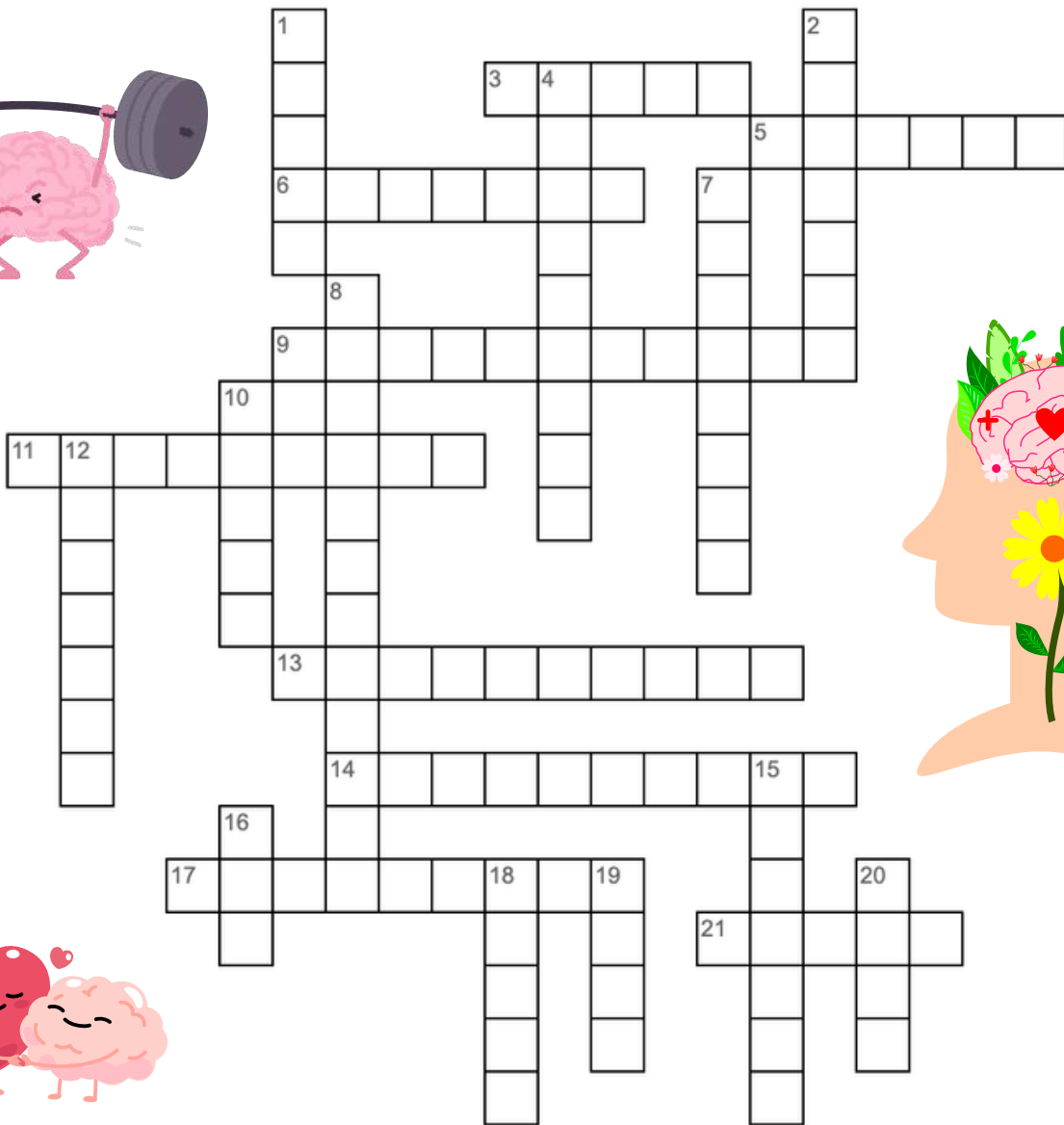
Embracing the Road Ahead

Retirement is far more than a financial milestone—it's a deeply personal life transition that unfolds over time. It marks the beginning of a new chapter shaped by choice, freedom, and possibility. While the routines of working life may fade, retirement invites you to intentionally design each day in ways that reflect who you are and what matters most to you.

By nurturing a sense of purpose, staying socially connected, caring for your physical health, and tending to your mental and emotional well-being, this stage of life can be rich with growth, joy, and fulfillment. Purpose may come from learning something new, giving back, strengthening relationships, or simply enjoying moments of peace and reflection. Staying engaged—and open to change—helps create a retirement that feels meaningful and balanced.

As we honor Mental Health Awareness Month, let this be a gentle reminder that emotional well-being is not a luxury; it's an essential part of enjoying the retirement you've worked so hard to achieve. Caring for your mental health supports resilience, confidence, and peace of mind, allowing you to face life's changes with clarity and strength. Retirement isn't an ending; it's an opportunity to live well, stay connected, and embrace each day with purpose and hope.

Mental Health Crossword



Across

- 3 You feel this when you have nothing to do
- 5 Many people feel this when they do not have coffee in the morning
- 6 When waiting for someone, it is best to be this
- 9 When you feel this way, you might cause a little bit of trouble
- 11 Christians are encouraged to be this all the time, but especially during Lent
- 13 If you win the war, you are this
- 14 Before making decisions it is a good idea to be this
- 17 The opposite of awful
- 21 Children often act this way to make grown ups laugh

Down

- 1 Don't worry. Be _____!
- 2 Many people feel this if they have to speak in front of a crowd
- 4 People who are disrespectful and loud are also this
- 7 The opposite of guilty
- 8 The feeling you get when your plans fall apart
- 10 You might feel this when someone hurts your feelings
- 12 How you feel when you are looking forward to something
- 15 People who worry a lot are sometimes labeled this
- 16 This is a feeling and a woman's name
- 18 This is a feeling and a man's name
- 19 Everybody needs this
- 20 This feeling rhymes with some



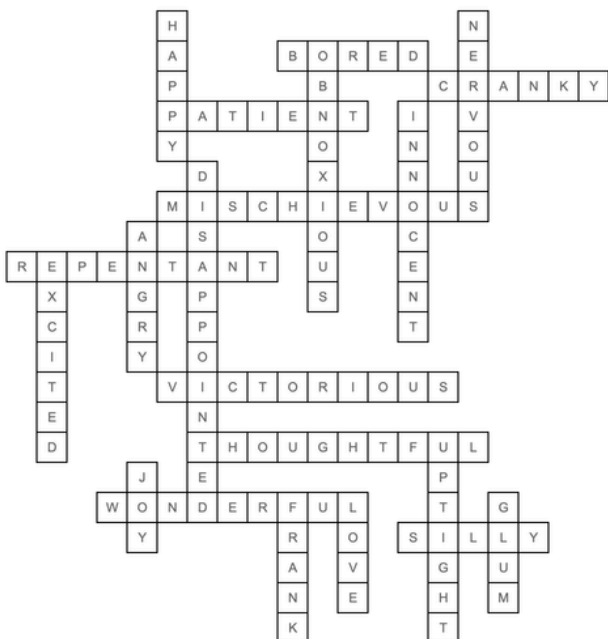
UPCOMING MO MEDICARE 101 WORKSHOPS

<p><u>St. Louis County Library – Clark Family Branch</u> 1640 South Lindbergh Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63131</p>	<p>Tuesday May 19th 3:00pm</p>
<p><u>St. Louis County Library – Bridgeton Trails Branch</u> 3455 McKelvey Rd. Bridgeton, MO 63044</p>	<p>Wednesday May 20th 6:00pm</p>
<p><u>St. Louis County Library – Oak Bend Branch</u> 842 South Holmes Ave. St. Louis, MO 63122</p>	<p>Wednesday May 27th 6:00pm</p>
<p><u>St. Louis County Library – Daniel Boone Branch</u> 300 Clarkson Rd. Ellisville, MO 63011</p>	<p>Thursday May 28th 3:30pm</p>



Space is Limited!
Register Today:
usamedicare101.org/ADL

Thanks for reading! Please contact me with any questions about Medicare or your retirement planning.



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