



Bulletin
Scam Alert

Medicare Doughnut Hole Deception

If you're a qualified recipient, you don't have to do anything to get your rebate

by: Sid Kirchheimer | from: [AARP Bulletin](#) | June 28, 2010



Getty Images

As those \$250 “doughnut hole” rebate checks start reaching eligible Medicare recipients, so are warnings about potential scams associated with these one-time, tax-free payments

Days before the first batch of checks was mailed—on June 10, to about 80,000 people—federal officials including Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder urged every state attorney general to “mount a substantial outreach campaign” to educate older Americans about scams pegged to the rebate checks and other Medicare programs. Many AGs have already complied.

A big concern is that con artists will call your home pretending to be Medicare officials trying to send you your doughnut hole money—just as soon as you give your Medicare number, your bank account number or other personal information. That data, of course, can be used to steal your identity.

Hang up!

So, if you get such a call, hang up! You can do so with full confidence knowing one important fact,

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the key message of the federal warnings:

You don't have to do anything to get your check except qualify.

There are no forms to fill out, no requirement to change your existing plan, no reason whatsoever to share personal information with anyone.

Your \$250 payment will automatically be issued if you drop into the infamous doughnut hole this year. That occurs when, after paying your Part D \$310 deductible, you spend at least \$2,830 out of pocket on prescription medications. Medicare expects that it will send out about 4 million of these checks in 2010.

No such thing as Obamacare

Officials are worried about the doughnut hole scam because crooks have already used the same basic technique concerning the new health care law. They call making false claims that the law requires you to get a new Medicare card or make changes in your Part D coverage and pretty soon they're asking for personal information.

Hang up. And also avoid any medical insurance solicitation—whether delivered in person at your door or by phone, mail or e-mail—that uses the made-up term “Obamacare.”

Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) with questions about your \$250 rebate or to report any Medicare-related scam.

Sid Kirchheimer writes about health and consumer issues.