RELIABLE READS MEDICARE · A GUIDE IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Working Past 65: The Decision Guide

Still working at 65 — or covered by a spouse who is? You may be able to delay parts of Medicare without penalty. Whether that's smart depends on three questions, and the traps live in the details.

Question 1 — How big is the employer?

20 or more employees: the employer plan stays primary. You can usually delay Part B without penalty and keep your coverage as-is.

Fewer than 20 employees: Medicare becomes primary at 65 whether you enroll or not — meaning an un-enrolled person can be left with the employer plan paying only what Medicare wouldn't have. Delaying here is usually a mistake. Confirm your employer's size before deciding anything.

Question 2 — Do you contribute to an HSA?

You cannot contribute to a Health Savings Account while enrolled in *any* part of Medicare — and here is the piece almost nobody hears in time:

> **The six-month lookback.** If you enroll in Medicare (or start Social Security, which enrolls you in Part A automatically) after 65, Part A is backdated up to six months. Contributions made during that backdated stretch become excess contributions — a tax problem you created months before you knew the rule. Plan your last HSA contribution at least six months before Medicare starts.

Question 3 — What happens when you finally retire?

After employment or qualifying employer coverage ends, whichever happens first, you have an **eight-month Special Enrollment Period** for Part B. Two rules decide whether it saves you:

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- [ ] **COBRA does not count as employer coverage.** The eight-month clock starts when employment or employer coverage ends, whichever happens first. COBRA does not extend it; missing the deadline can lead to a penalty.
- [ ] **Retiree coverage doesn't count either.** Same clock, same trap.
- [ ] **Sign up in the first month or two, not month seven.** Coverage timing lags a late signup, and a coverage gap helps nobody.

Your retirement-month checklist

- [ ] **Note when employment and employer coverage end** — the eight months run from whichever happens first.
- [ ] **Enroll in Part B** (and pick your path — Supplement or Advantage — with your doctors and medications in front of you).
- [ ] **Check creditable drug coverage** — a gap of 63 consecutive days can trigger a Part D penalty, even if you take no medication. Extra Help is an exception.
- [ ] **Ask HR for the letter proving your coverage dates** — Social Security will want it.

> **The honest summary:** delaying is often right for people at large employers — and quietly expensive for everyone who missed one of the three traps above. Ten minutes with your actual dates settles it.

Bring us your dates. We'll map the delay-or-enroll decision to your employer, your HSA, and your retirement plans — free, in plain language.

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