Wellness Wednesday: A New Medicare Card is Coming. Be Ready.

AAFCS thanks Community of Family Economics & Resource Management member Patti Wooten Swanson for this timely submission on Medicare. Patti is a Nutrition, Family, and Consumer Science Advisor with University of California Cooperative Extension, and a member of the California Affiliate of AAFCS.

Did you know? You’ll be getting a new Medicare card with a new number for claiming benefits.

Why? Currently, your Medicare number is the same as your Social Security number and it is printed on your Medicare card. This has led to growing identity theft among those 65 years and older. It is easy for a thief to get that number. Anyone who stands too close to you when you check out at the pharmacy, who sees your card when you open your wallet at the cash register, or who finds your missing wallet (with your Medicare card inside) can use the number to steal your identity and fraudulently claim benefits in your name.

What is Changing? The government re-designed the Medicare card so that it does not reveal your social security number. Here's what the new one looks like:
What do you need to do? *Nothing.* That’s important because scammers may take try to take advantage of someone who is not aware of the process for receiving their new Medicare card. Medicare will mail a new card to you. You will not need to fill out a form, pay a fee, or give someone your social security number. Here’s what the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) advises to protect yourself:

- If someone calls, emails, texts, or sends a letter claiming to be from Medicare, and asking for your Social Security number or bank information…**Hang up.**
  **That’s a scam.** Medicare won’t call you and will never ask for your Social Security number or bank information.
- If someone asks you to pay for your new Medicare card…**That’s a scam.** Your new Medicare card is free.
- If someone threatens to cancel your benefits if you don’t give them information or money…**That’s also a scam.** New Medicare cards will be mailed out to you automatically. There won’t be any changes to your benefits.

When? Delivery begins in April 2018 and implementation will be completed by April 2019.

**Questions?** Learn more at the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](https://www.medicare.gov).