



Medi-Cal is Still Open for Enrollment!

Q: *Is there a deadline for when I can apply for Medi-Cal?*

A: No, however, it is important to be enrolled in health coverage by March 31, 2014 to avoid a tax penalty. You can enroll in Medi-Cal during any month of the year. If you are eligible for Medi-Cal, you are eligible for the entire month in which you were found eligible. In some cases, you may be able to get Medi-Cal coverage right away. [Contact your human services agency](#) for more information.

If you want to buy private individual health insurance through Covered California, you will only be able to do so during their “open enrollment” period which ends on March 31, 2014. If you do not apply by March 31st, you will not be able to buy private health insurance until the fall of 2014 unless you have a special situation such as a birth, adoption, divorce, or lose your current health coverage.

Q: *Will I have to pay a tax penalty if I don’t get health coverage through Covered California, Medi-Cal, or my employer by March 31, 2014?*

A: Maybe. Starting in 2014, everyone must, by law, have health coverage. If you do not have health coverage, you may have to pay a penalty when you file your 2014 taxes in April 2015. However, some people may not have to pay a tax penalty if they are not required to file taxes or fall under one of the exceptions (see page 2).

In 2014, the tax penalty is the **greater of:**

- A.** \$95 for each adult and \$47.50 for each child, up to \$285 per family **OR**
 - B.** 1% of the tax filer’s annual household income minus the federal tax filing threshold.
- (See Table 1 below)

The penalties go up in later years.

Table 1. 2013 Filing Requirements Chart for Most Taxpayers

IF your tax filing status is...	AND at the end of 2013 you were...*	THEN file a return if your gross income was at least...
Single	Under 65	\$10,000
	65 or older	\$11,500
Head of household	Under 65	\$12,850
	65 or older	\$14,350
Married, filing jointly	Under 65 (both spouses)	\$20,000
	65 or older (one spouse)	\$21,200
	65 or older (both spouses)	\$22,400
Married, filing separately	Any age	\$ 3,900



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Q: *If I am not required to file taxes because my income is too low, and don't have health coverage, do I still have to pay a tax penalty?*

A: No. Although you are still required to have health coverage under the law, you will not have to pay the tax penalty if you do not have health coverage because you meet one of the exceptions: you are not required to file taxes due to your income. (see below). You don't need to do anything in April 2015 to apply for this exception.

Q: *If I do file taxes and don't have health coverage in 2014, are there other exceptions to the requirement that I could qualify for or will I have to pay the tax penalty in 2015?*

A: There are additional exceptions you may qualify for from the law's requirement to have health coverage. You do not have to have health coverage if:

- You are a member of a recognized religious sect or division that is opposed to accepting any insurance benefits, or are a member of a recognized health care sharing ministry.
- You are a member of a federally recognized Indian tribe or eligible for services through an Indian Health Services provider.
- You went without coverage for less than three months in a row during the year.
- You can't afford coverage because the lowest-priced coverage you can get would cost more than 8% of your annual household income.
- You are in a jail or prison.
- You are not lawfully present in the U.S.
- Hardship:** You have experienced difficult personal situation that made it hard for you to get health coverage such as homelessness, the death of a close family member, bankruptcy, substantial recent medical debt, or a natural disasters that damaged your property.

Q. *When and how do I get an exemption?*

A: You do not need to request an exemption right now. The tax penalty will not be assessed until you file taxes next year, in 2015; at that time, you can request an exemption on your tax form. Some exemptions do not require an application (e.g., income below filing threshold) so no action is required. For a few exemptions, such as hardship, you must request the exemption before April 15, 2015 by filling out an application. Application forms and instructions on how to apply are at: <https://www.healthcare.gov/exemptions/>.



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What do I qualify for? Remember that best way to find out what health coverage you're eligible for is to apply. There is one application for health coverage and when you apply, you'll be told whether you're eligible for Medi-Cal or a Covered California plan and how much financial help you can get to help pay for a Covered California plan. Only then will you be able to correctly determine if you can't afford health coverage and avoid paying the tax penalty if you don't buy health coverage for 2014.

Q: *If I am eligible for Medi-Cal, but choose not to enroll, do I still have to pay the tax penalty?*

A. Yes. Medi-Cal is considered affordable health coverage that is available to you. If you choose not to enroll, you will have to pay the tax penalty unless you meet one of the other exceptions.

If you are eligible for Medi-Cal and don't enroll, you can buy a Covered California plan but will not be eligible for financial help. You are not eligible for financial help to buy a Covered California plan because you could get low or no cost health coverage from Medi-Cal, which is considered "minimum essential coverage."

Q: *If I apply for Medi-Cal before March 31st but I don't find out I'm eligible until after March 31st, what will my effective date of coverage be?*

A: Medi-Cal coverage starts the month you apply even if you are notified after that. However, you must immediately enroll in a health plan once you are found eligible for Medi-Cal by filling out a separate enrollment packet. If you send this enrollment packet before the 15th of the month, your coverage will start the 1st of the next month. If you send the packet after the 15th, your coverage will start 2 months later. Until you are enrolled in a health plan and receive a plan membership card, you can use your Medi-Cal card (known as a Benefits Identification Card (BIC)) to access services at Medi-Cal accepting providers. You also may be eligible for Medi-Cal prior to your application month if you incurred medical expenses during the previous 3 months.

Q. *Do I have to file taxes to apply for Medi-Cal if I don't normally file taxes?*

A: No. You can provide proof of your income with other documents if you do not file taxes. You are also not required to file taxes in the future if you apply for Medi-Cal, but you must agree to do this if you are enrolling in a Covered California plan and want to receive financial help.



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Q: *If I don't file taxes, what income information can I provide with my Medi-Cal application?*

A: Medi-Cal requires proof of the income you are claiming on the application. To provide proof of income from work, you can submit paycheck stubs or other documentation from your employer. Your work income may also be able to verified through state records if you provide your Social Security Number. Remember to report all income you receive; certain income is not counted and failure to report income may be considered fraud.

Q: *If I sign up for Medi-Cal, do I risk losing my home?*

A: No, but after you die, the state can recover the costs of giving you Medi-Cal in two situations. The state can only make a claim against the property you left behind if:

- 1) You were 55 years of age or older when you received Medi-Cal, or
- 2) You were any age and received inpatient nursing facility Medi-Cal services, or certain other institutional services.

There are some limits on recovery. For example, the state will not place a claim on your property if when you pass away you have a minor child, or a child of *any age* that is blind or disabled. If you are survived by your spouse, the state will not place a claim on your property during your spouse's lifetime. The state can also give up its claim on your property if it would result in substantial hardship to your dependents, heirs or survivors. The state has information brochures on this subject available at <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/publications/Pages/BrochuresMedi-Cal.aspx>. Also, for more information, go to www.canhr.org.

If you are under the age of 55 and not in a nursing facility, receiving Medi-Cal benefits does not place your home at risk even after you die because the state will not recover for the cost of providing Medi-Cal benefits to you.