

2024 UMP-Classic Rate Increase Q and A

First, does the UMP-Classic cost issue apply to those retirees not in the Health Care Authority/PEBB system?

No. It only applies to those retirees who use PEBB for their health care coverage.

Is it true that the HCA is going to phase-out UMP-Classic after 2024?

No. In the summer of 2022 there was an HCA staff recommendation to phase out UMP-Classic due to what they saw as ever-increasing costs, but that recommendation was rejected by the PEB Board on July 30, 2022. There are no plans for a phase-out, and, at the earliest, that subject will not be discussed by the PEB Board until sometime in 2024.

What are the cost differences in the various Health Care Authority/PEBB Medicare supplement plans for 2024?

Here is the chart for single subscribers. Double the rate for a married couple. This applies only to those 65 years of age or older.

2023 PEBB Medicare Retiree Monthly Rates, Single Subscriber:

Kaiser NW Senior Advantage	\$193.95
Kaiser WA Medicare Advantage	\$188.62
UMP Classic Medicare	\$532.94
United Health Care (MA-PD) PEBB Complete	\$160.58
United Health Care (MA-PD) PEBB Balanced	\$135.65
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan F	\$119.05
Premera Medicare Supplement Plan G	\$101.99

Why is UMP-Classic so high compared with the other options?

Primarily the cost difference is for prescription drug coverage. The four Advantage plans (two from Kaiser Permanente and two from United Health Care) enjoy a 75% cost savings for prescription drugs, due to a large federal subsidy. UMP-Classic, as a self-insured, state-managed program, does not qualify for the subsidy. The Premera plans do not cover prescription drugs and those choosing Premera need to purchase a separate Rx rider (Medicare Plan D).

How much would a subscriber save if he or she changed to, say, UHC-Complete, which we understand was negotiated by the Health Care Authority to be the equivalent of UMP-Classic?

\$4,468 per subscriber per year, or \$8,800+ for a married couple. The savings would be more if the choice was made for UHC-Balance or Premera (but Rx coverage must be added for Premera), and less if either of the Kaiser Permanente options was chosen.

When is the decision deadline if a plan switch is to be made in 2024?

The month of November is the PEBB open enrollment period. This means that all paperwork must be **received** (not just postmarked) by the HCA on or before November 30 to qualify for a switch that would become effective on January 1, 2024.

Where can I get information about coverage, deductibles, co-pays, and eligibility for the various plans?

WSSRA partnered with HCA/PEBB on two presentations on this topic. The first was at the Pasco Convention in June, and the second on September 26 via Zoom. That presentation was recorded and can be viewed on the WSSRA website (www.wssra.org) by clicking on the “Webinars” tab and scrolling down to the recording. In addition, the updated slide deck that was used on September 26 also is posted. It contains links to HCA/PEBB sources that provide comparative information. In addition, the 2024 Medicare supplement coverage/co-pays/deductible comparisons can be found at <https://fortress.wa.gov/hca/pebbhealthplan/compare.aspx>.

Is WSSRA recommending a plan?

No. Like the Health Care Authority, we are providing key information about the plans. The final decision lies in the hands of each retiree who acts in his or her best interests. The important piece is to learn about each plan and decide which one is the best for individual/family circumstances.

Is there a place to get assistance if questions exist after studying the charts?

Yes. See below phone numbers for the various plans. Questions about unique health issues, or unclear coverage questions can be addressed through these sources. In addition, the state Insurance Commissioner’s Office sponsors “SHIBA” (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors), a free service with trained volunteers who are available to work one-on-one with retirees on Medicare issues. SHIBA volunteer services can be accessed by calling 800-562-6900. (Note: SHIBA does not sell products. They are organized to offer unbiased health care advice and assistance).

Kaiser NW Senior Advantage	800-813-2000
Kaiser WA Original Medicare/Medicare Advantage	888-901-4600
Premera Plan G	800-817-3049
United Health Care-Complete or Balanced	855-873-3268
Uniform Medical Plan-Classic	888-849-3681

What can I do to make sure that my current doctors and pharmacy will cover charges if I decide to switch plans?

Call each of one of your doctors and pharmacies and ask them if they would cover the plan that you are considering. Incidentally, UHC-Complete is currently accepted by 97% of the health care providers in Washington that cover UMP-Classic. However, and to be sure, all of your current doctors and pharmacies should be called and asked about coverage with whatever non-UMP-Classic option that you choose. Note that Kaiser Permanente is an HMO plan, and therefore, to assure full coverage, doctor access is limited to those in Kaiser panel. The others generally are accepted by all health care providers that accept Medicare patients.

If I change plans for 2024 am I stuck with the new plan forever, or can I get back to UMP-Classic in 2025?

As a member of PEBB, you can change plans on an annual basis. November is the open enrollment month, so, in November of 2024, if you are not satisfied with what you chose for 2024, you can go back to your old plan effective January 1, 2025.