

January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month – Please join with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in promoting increased awareness of glaucoma and the glaucoma screening benefit provided by Medicare. Nearly 3 million Americans have glaucoma, the second leading cause of blindness in the world. Often progressing silently, with no symptoms, it is estimated that many people that do have the disease don't know it. With glaucoma, by the time a problem is noticed permanent damage has already occurred. With early detection and treatment, however, blindness may be prevented.

Medicare Coverage

Medicare provides coverage of an annual glaucoma screening for beneficiaries in at least one of the following high risk groups:

- Individuals with diabetes mellitus;
- Individuals with a family history of glaucoma;
- African-Americans age 50 and older; and
- Hispanic-Americans age 65 and older.

A covered glaucoma screening includes:

- A dilated eye examination with an intraocular pressure (IOP) measurement; and
- A direct ophthalmoscopy examination or a slit-lamp biomicroscopic examination.

What Can You Do?

As a trusted source of health care information, your patients rely on their physician's or other health care professional's recommendations. CMS needs your help to ensure that all eligible people with Medicare take full advantage of the annual glaucoma screening benefit. Talk to your Medicare patients that are in the high risk groups identified above about their risk for glaucoma and encourage them to get regular yearly glaucoma screening examinations.

For More Information

- For more information about Medicare's coverage of glaucoma screening, visit the CMS website <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/GlaucomaScreening/>
- CMS has also developed a variety of educational products and resources to help health care professionals and their staff become familiar with coverage, coding, billing, and reimbursement for all preventive services covered by Medicare.
 - The MLN Preventive Services Educational Products Web Page ~ provides descriptions and ordering information for all provider specific educational products related to preventive services. The web page is located at http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp on the CMS website.
 - The CMS website provides information for each preventive service covered by Medicare. Go to www.cms.hhs.gov, select "Medicare", scroll down to the "Prevention" heading.
- For information to share with your Medicare patients, visit www.medicare.gov on the Web.
- For more information about National Glaucoma Awareness Month, please visit <http://www.preventblindness.org/>

Flu Shot Reminder - It's Not Too Late to Get the Flu Shot. We are in the midst of flu season and a flu vaccine is still the best way to prevent infection and the complications associated with the flu. But re-vaccination is necessary each year because the flu viruses change each year. Encourage your Medicare patients who haven't already done so to get their annual flu shot and don't forget to immunize yourself and your staff. **Protect yourself, your patients, and your family and friends. Get Your Flu Shot. It's Not Too Late!** Remember - Influenza vaccination is a covered Part B benefit. Note that influenza vaccine is NOT a Part D covered drug. For more information about Medicare's coverage of adult immunizations and educational resources, go to CMS's website: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0667.pdf> .