

March is National Kidney Month. As you know, chronic kidney disease (CKD) is a growing problem in the United States. CKD can lead to cardiovascular disease, among other serious health conditions, and left unchecked can eventually lead to kidney failure. Over 400,000 Americans suffer from kidney failure (end stage renal disease, or ESRD) and require either kidney dialysis or transplantation to live. Additionally, 8 to 20 million Americans have reduced kidney function, due primarily to diabetes and hypertension, which can lead to kidney failure. ESRD is Medicare's only disease-specific program that entitles people of all ages to Medicare coverage on the basis of their diagnosis. Your patients may be at risk for chronic kidney disease if they:

- Have Diabetes
- Have High Blood Pressure
- Have a Family History of Chronic Kidney Disease
- Are 60 Years of Age or Older
- Are from the following ethnic groups (African American, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander)

The Medicare Program provides coverage of kidney dialysis and kidney transplant services for eligible Medicare patients. Your Medicare patients may also be eligible for coverage of cardiovascular disease and diabetes screenings, diseases that may increase the risk of kidney damage.

What can you do? Prevention is possible! Talk with your patients about their risk for kidney disease and encourage them to take advantage of the appropriate Medicare benefits, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes screenings and medical nutrition therapy services. Early treatment can slow progression of kidney disease and reduce cardiovascular risk.

Resources

To learn more about Medicare's coverage of and payment for kidney related services, please refer to the following publications, developed by the Medicare Learning Network (MLN) for health care professionals:

- *Physician's Guide to Medicare Coverage of Kidney Dialysis and Kidney Transplant Services* www.cms.hhs.gov/MedlearnProducts/downloads/Book_Kidney_Dialysis-Final.pdf (Available in print or download)
- *Fistula First Breakthrough Initiative* www.cms.hhs.gov/MedlearnProducts/downloads/FistulaFirstbroch.pdf (Available in download only)
- *End Stage Renal Disease Composite Payment Rate System* www.cms.hhs.gov/MedlearnProducts/downloads/ESRDCompRatePaymentSys.pdf (Available in download only)
- *The Guide to Medicare Preventive Services for Physicians, Providers, Suppliers, and Other Health Care Professionals* www.cms.hhs.gov/MedlearnProducts/downloads/PSGUID.pdf (Available in print or download)

Print products may be ordered, free of charge, from the MLN Product Ordering page located at www.cms.hhs.gov/medlearn on the CMS website. These products are also available to view on line as a download and may be reprinted or redistributed as needed.

Other Helpful Education Resources

- *National Kidney Disease Education Program www.nkdep.nih.gov/ to learn more about kidney disease and how you can help your patients.*

For more information about National Kidney Month visit www.kidney.org/ on the Web.