

August is National Immunization Awareness Month. This annual health observance is a great opportunity to educate seniors and other people with Medicare about the importance of disease control and prevention through immunization. Vaccine-preventable disease levels are at or near record lows. Yet, many adults remain under-immunized, missing opportunities to protect themselves against diseases such as hepatitis B, seasonal influenza, and pneumococcal disease. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) ask all health care providers who provide care to Medicare patients to join us during National Immunization Awareness Month to help protect your Medicare patients from vaccine-preventable diseases by checking to make sure their immunizations are up-to-date and encouraging utilization of Medicare-covered immunizations that are appropriate for them.

Medicare Part B Immunization Benefits

Medicare provides coverage for seasonal influenza, pneumococcal, and hepatitis B vaccines and their administration, under Medicare Part B, for qualified beneficiaries as preventive immunizations. Providers who accept the Medicare-approved payment amount for these services are reimbursed under Medicare Part B.

- **Seasonal Influenza Immunization**

Medicare provides payment for the seasonal influenza vaccine and its administration for all people with Medicare, once per influenza season, in the fall or winter. Medicare may cover additional influenza vaccinations, if medically necessary. *(Note: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the 2010 – 2011 influenza vaccine will protect against the 2009 H1N1, and two other influenza viruses <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/>.)*

- **Pneumococcal Immunization**

Medicare provides payment for the pneumococcal vaccine and its administration for all beneficiaries, generally once in a lifetime. Medicare may cover additional vaccinations based on risk.

- **Hepatitis B Immunization**

Medicare provides payment for the hepatitis B vaccine and its administration for beneficiaries at medium to high risk of contracting hepatitis B.

For More Information:

CMS Adult Immunizations Web Page <http://www.cms.gov/AdultImmunizations/> (Please Note: The “Immunizers’ Question & Answer Guide to Medicare Coverage of Seasonal Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccinations”, which provides administration and flu vaccine payment rates for use by mass immunizers and physician practices, will be updated and posted to this site sometime in early October, 2010.)

CMS Medicare Learning Network (MLN) Preventive Services Educational Products Web Page http://www.cms.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp#TopOfPage – This site provides access to MLN educational resources developed by CMS for fee-for-service providers related to Medicare-covered preventive services, including adult immunizations.

For information about National Immunization Awareness Month, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam/default.htm>