

February is American Heart Month ~ Since 1999, the rate of deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke in American has declined. While much progress has been achieved in reducing the death rate, heart disease and stroke still remain the number 1 and number 3 causes of death in the U.S., and a major cause of disability and reduced quality of life. Found more often among people aged 65 or older, heart disease is largely preventable. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is taking this opportunity to remind health care professionals that Medicare beneficiaries are covered for certain cardiovascular screening blood tests. This screening can help beneficiaries learn if they have an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

Medicare provides coverage of the following cardiovascular screening blood tests for the early detection of cardiovascular disease or abnormalities associated with an elevated risk of heart disease and stroke:

- Total Cholesterol Test
- Cholesterol Test for High-density Lipoproteins
- Triglycerides Test

Coverage of cardiovascular screening blood tests is provided as a Medicare Part B benefit. The beneficiary will pay nothing for the blood tests (there is no coinsurance or copayment and no deductible for this benefit).

IMPORTANT NOTE: *The cardiovascular screening benefit covered by Medicare is a stand alone billable service separate from the Initial Preventive Physical Examination or Welcome to Medicare Visit and **does not** have to be obtained within the first six months of a beneficiary's Medicare Part B coverage.*

Spread the Word

CMS needs your help getting the word out about the cardiovascular screening benefit covered by Medicare. Talk with your patients about their risk factors for cardiovascular disease and how they can help lessen their risk through lifestyle modifications such as diet, physical activity, better control of cholesterol, and smoking cessation or if necessary with medication. Encourage your Medicare patients not previously diagnosed with cardiovascular disease to take full advantage of the cardiovascular screening blood tests covered by Medicare. It could save their lives!

For More Information

- CMS has developed a variety of educational products and resources to help health care professionals and their staff learn more about coverage, coding, billing, and reimbursement for preventive services and screenings covered by Medicare.
 - The MLN Preventive Services Educational Products Web Page ~ provides descriptions and ordering information for MLN preventive services educational products and resources for health care professionals and their staff. http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp
 - Expanded Benefits Brochure ~ This tri-fold brochure provides health care professionals with an overview of Medicare's coverage of the initial preventive physical exam (IPPE), ultrasound screening for abdominal aortic aneurysms, and cardiovascular screening blood tests.
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/Expanded_Benefits.pdf To order copies of the brochure, go to the Medicare Learning Network Product Ordering System located at:
http://cms.meridianksi.com/kc/main/kc_frame.asp?kc_ident=kc0001&loc=5
 - The CMS website provides additional information about cardiovascular screening benefit at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/CardiovasDiseaseScreening/>
- For information to share with your Medicare patients, visit <http://www.medicare.gov>
- For information about American Heart Month, please visit the American Heart Association's website at <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200000> and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at http://www.cdc.gov/DHDSP/announcements/american_heart_month.htm on the Web.

Thank you.