

February is American Heart Month ~ Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States. Found more often among people aged 65 or older, heart disease is largely preventable. CMS wants to take this opportunity to remind health care professionals that Medicare beneficiaries are covered for certain cardiovascular screening blood tests. 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).

What Can You Do?

This benefit presents an opportunity for health care professionals to help Medicare beneficiaries learn if they have an increased risk of developing heart disease and how they can control their cholesterol levels through diet, physical activity, or if necessary with medication. CMS needs your help to get the word out about the Medicare cardiovascular screening benefit. Talk to your patients about their risk for cardiovascular disease and encourage them to take full advantage of this potentially life saving 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.*

For More Information

- For more information about Medicare's coverage of cardiovascular screening blood test, visit the CMS website <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/CardiovasDiseaseScreening/>
- 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", and scroll down to the "Prevention" heading.
- For information to share with your Medicare patients, visit www.medicare.gov on the Web.
- 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.

Flu Shot Reminder – It's Not Too Late to Give and Get the Flu Shot!

The peak of flu season typically occurs between late December and March; however, flu season can last until May.

Protect yourself, your patients, and your family and friends by getting and giving the flu shot. Each office visit presents an opportunity for you to talk with your patients about the importance of getting an annual flu shot and a lifetime pneumococcal vaccination. Remember - influenza and pneumococcal vaccination and their administration are covered Part B benefits. Note that influenza and pneumococcal vaccines are NOT Part D covered drugs. For more information about Medicare's coverage of adult immunizations and educational resources, go to CMS' website: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0667.pdf>.