

Vaccines Aren't Just for Kids!

August is National Immunization Awareness Month! Too many adults become ill, disabled, and die each year from diseases that could have been prevented by vaccines. Everyone from the very young to senior citizens can benefit from immunizations. While many consider this to be a time to ensure that children are immunized for school, *National Immunization Awareness Month* is the perfect time to remind patients, health care employees, family members, friends, co-workers and others to take advantage of opportunities to get up-to date on their vaccinations.

Medicare covers both the cost of pneumococcal and influenza vaccine and their administration by recognized providers. No beneficiary co-insurance or co-payment applies and a beneficiary does not have to meet his or her deductible to receive an influenza or pneumococcal immunization. Medicare also covers hepatitis B vaccination for persons at high or intermediate risk. The coinsurance or co-payment applies for hepatitis B vaccination after the yearly deductible has been met.

Disease prevention is key to public health. It is always better to prevent a disease than to treat it. For all persons age 65 or older, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and other leading authorities recommend lifetime vaccination against pneumococcal disease and annual vaccination against influenza. Medicare will cover a booster pneumococcal vaccine for high risk persons if five (5) years have passed since their last vaccination.

How Can You Help?

As a health care professional, you can help your Medicare patients and others understand the importance of disease prevention through immunizations. Your recommendation is the most important factor in increasing immunization rates among adults. You can help your Medicare patients take full advantage of the Medicare benefits that are right for them, including an annual influenza vaccination, a pneumococcal vaccination and the hepatitis B vaccination (for beneficiaries at high to intermediate risk for contracting the disease) by encouraging utilization of these benefits as appropriate.

For More Information

- For more information about Medicare's coverage of adult immunizations, including coverage, coding, billing and reimbursement, please visit the following CMS websites
 - The MLN Preventive Services Educational Products Web Page
www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp#TopOfPage
 - Adult Immunizations http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AdultImmunizations/01_Overview.asp#TopOfPage
- For information to share with your Medicare patients, please visit www.medicare.gov on the Web.
- To learn more about National Immunization Awareness Month, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam/default.htm#overview> on the Web.

Thank you for partnering with CMS as we strive to increase awareness and promote utilization of vaccines that can prevent infectious disease and save lives.