

May Message

In conjunction with the observance of National Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services would like to take this opportunity to remind health care professionals that Medicare provides coverage of **bone mass measurements** once every 24 months (more often if medically necessary) for people with Medicare at risk for osteoporosis.

Osteoporosis (often called the “silent disease” because bone loss occurs without symptoms) is responsible for an estimated 1.5 million fractures annually – an event that often leads to a downward spiral in physical health and quality of life, including losing the ability to walk, stand up, or dress, and can lead to premature death. 20 percent of senior citizens who suffer a hip fracture die within 1 year.

According to the US Surgeon General’s 2004 report *Bone Health and Osteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General*, due to the aging of the population and the previous lack of focus on bone health, the number of hip fractures in the United States could double or triple by the year 2020. The report found that many patients were not being given appropriate information about prevention; and many patients were not having appropriate testing to diagnose osteoporosis or establish osteoporosis risk.

What can you do? National Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month presents an excellent opportunity for you to promote prevention, detection, and treatment of osteoporosis.

- 1) Become familiar with Medicare’s coverage for bone mass measurements;
- 2) Talk with your patients about their risks for osteoporosis and prevention; and
- 3) Encourage utilization of bone mass measurements for eligible Medicare patients.

Osteoporosis can be prevented. As a health care professional, you play a critical role in helping your patients maintain strong, healthy bones throughout their life. Please join with CMS in spreading the word about prevention and early detection of osteoporosis and encouraging the utilization of bone mass measurements for eligible Medicare patients.

For More Information

Special Edition MLN Matters Article SE0630

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/SE0630.pdf> ~ provides information about the array of preventive services and screenings for which Medicare provides payment and lists the many resources developed by CMS to educate health care professionals about these services.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Bone Health and Osteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2004. This document can be downloaded at <http://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/library/bonehealth/> on the Department of Health and Human Services website.

The National Osteoporosis Foundation www.nof.org ~ to learn more about National Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month.

Thanks for your help in this worthwhile endeavor!