

New Medicare Benefits For Controlling Diabetes

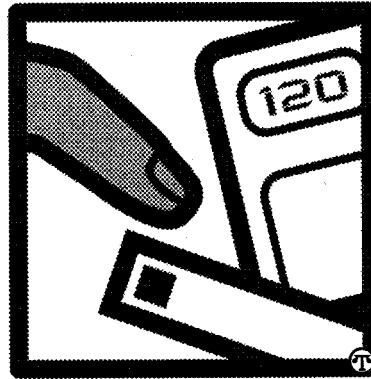
(NAPS)—About 16 million people in the United States have diabetes, two-thirds of whom have been diagnosed with the disease.

Research has clearly shown that measuring blood sugar and keeping it close to normal delays and may prevent the short- and long-term complications of diabetes. However, some Medicare beneficiaries have problems paying for the equipment and supplies needed to measure their blood sugar. Fortunately, new Medicare benefits can help people control the disease by helping to cover the cost of blood glucose monitoring equipment and supplies, including blood glucose monitors, test strips, and lancets. The new policy applies to beneficiaries whether or not they use insulin or have type 1 or type 2 diabetes.

Here's how the benefit works: Once you meet the annual deductible for Medicare medical insurance (part B), you pay only 20 percent of the cost of your diabetes monitoring equipment and supplies—Medicare pays the other 80 percent.

“Making the system more accommodating for people to get their monitoring equipment and supplies is imperative in controlling diabetes,” says Dr. Charles Clark, Chairman of the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP). Sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the NDEP, a federally sponsored initiative, aims to improve the treatment and outcomes for Americans living with diabetes.

The NDEP, in conjunction with the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA), has just launched a national campaign to



New Medicare benefits help cover the costs of supplies used by people with diabetes to monitor their blood sugar levels.

promote the newly expanded benefits. The awareness campaign will be delivered through TV, radio and print public service announcements. The NDEP hopes these new benefits will help people with diabetes who are covered by Medicare to make a personal commitment to improving their health by controlling their blood sugar.

Diabetes is a disease in which a person's body does not produce or properly use insulin. It is a chronic and life-threatening disease that can lead to blindness, kidney failure, nerve damage and lower-limb amputation. Besides monitoring blood sugar levels, people with diabetes need to eat foods to control their blood sugar, get regular physical activity, and take prescribed medications.

For more information about controlling diabetes and Medicare's expanded coverage, call the National Diabetes Education Program at 1-800-438-5383, or visit <http://ndep.nih.gov> or <http://www.medicare.gov> on the World Wide Web.