



Medicare: Issue of the Day

January 7, 2004

BETTER BENEFITS – MORE CHOICES

Good News about the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003!

Coverage for Diabetes Screening:

- ✧ Beginning in 2005, Medicare will provide coverage of diabetes screening tests for beneficiaries at risk for diabetes. Diabetes screening tests include a fasting plasma glucose test, and other such tests as the Secretary determines appropriate, in consultation with appropriate organizations.
- ✧ This new benefit will help at-risk Medicare beneficiaries find out about their condition much earlier and help them to treat and manage it so far fewer health consequences result for **millions of Americans**. At-risk individuals eligible for screening include those with hypertension, dyslipidemia, obesity, or a family history of diabetes.
- ✧ In 2002, an estimated 18 million people (6.3 percent of the population) had diabetes, costing the U.S. approximately \$132 billion. Of these 18 million people, over 5 million were undiagnosed.
- ✧ **This new screening benefit can save lives.** Diabetes was the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. in 2000. According to the American Diabetes Association, the risk for death among people with diabetes is about 2 times that of people without diabetes. Adults with diabetes have heart disease death rates about 2 – 4 times higher than adults without diabetes. The risk for strokes is similar.
- ✧ **Diabetes screening also will improve quality of life by treating the condition earlier, before it results in more severe health problems.** Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness among adults 20 – 74 years old and the leading cause of treated end-stage renal disease. More than 60 percent of non-traumatic lower-limb amputations in the U.S. occur among people with diabetes. However, with early detection and treatment, the development of severe vision loss can be reduced by 50–60 percent, amputation rates can be reduced by 45 – 85 percent, and kidney failure can be reduced by 30 – 70 percent.
- ✧ **Helping those who need it most:** the diabetes screening does not have deductible or co-pays, so beneficiaries do not incur any cost. This provides additional incentive to those with limited resources who might not otherwise access these benefits.