

## **New in 2007 ~ Medicare Now Provides Coverage for a One-time Ultrasound Screening for Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms as Part of the Initial Preventive Physical Examination**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) invites you to join with us in promoting awareness of abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA) and the new screening benefit for the early detection of this disease. Three in four aortic aneurysms are AAAs. Aortic aneurysms account for about 15,000 deaths in the United States annually; of these 9,000 are AAA-related. Men are 5 to 10 times more likely than women to have an AAA and the risk increases with age. Although AAAs may be asymptomatic for years, as many as 1 in 3 eventually rupture if left untreated.<sup>i ii</sup> Early diagnosis allows for more effective treatment and cure. Diagnosis of an AAA can be done painlessly with a simple ultrasound scan. Medicare now provides coverage for this screening service for eligible beneficiaries.

**Medicare Coverage** ~ Effective for dates of service on or after January 1, 2007, Medicare will pay for a one-time ultrasound screening for AAA for beneficiaries who are at risk (has a family history of AAA or is a man age 65 to 75 who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in his lifetime). Eligible beneficiaries must receive a referral for the screening as a result of their initial preventive physical examination (IPPE) also referred to as the Welcome to Medicare physical exam. There is no Part B deductible. The coinsurance/copayment applies.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Only Medicare beneficiaries who receive a referral for the AAA ultrasound screening as part of the Welcome to Medicare physical exam will be covered for the AAA benefit.

**How Can You Help?** As a trusted source, your recommendation is the most important factor in increasing the use of preventive services and screenings. CMS needs your help to ensure that patients new to Medicare receive their Welcome to Medicare physical exam within the first six months of their effective date in Medicare Part B and those beneficiaries at risk for AAA receive a referral for the ultrasound screening as part of their Welcome to Medicare physical exam. It could save their lives!

### **For More Information**

- For more information about Medicare's coverage of the AAA benefit, refer to *MLN Matters* article MM5235 (2006), *Implementation of a One-Time Only Ultrasound Screening for Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms (AAA), Resulting from a Referral from an Initial Preventive Physical Examination*, located at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNMattersArticles/downloads/MM5235.pdf> on the CMS website.
- 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](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp) on the CMS website.
- For information to share with your Medicare patients, visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) on the Web.
- For more information about Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms, please visit [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/arm/arm\\_what.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/arm/arm_what.html) on the Web.

Thank you for helping CMS to increase awareness of abdominal aortic aneurysm disease and the new AAA preventive benefit.

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### **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>.

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<sup>i</sup> National Heart Lung and Blood Institute Diseases and Conditions Index; [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/arm/arm\\_what.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/arm/arm_what.html)

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Preventive Services Task Force *Screening for Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm: A Best Evidence Systematic Review* <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstf05/aaascr/aaarev.htm>