

Committee on Ways and Means

Congress Has Prioritized Preventive and Wellness Measures

Cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke are the largest killers among the Medicare population and their treatment costs are the biggest expenditures in the Medicare program. These four chronic diseases account for nearly two out of every three deaths in the United States. Each may be prevented or treated more effectively when caught at earlier stages.

Congress added important preventive and wellness measures to Medicare in the *Medicare Prescription Drug Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003*:

- “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam upon eligibility for Medicare;
- Cardiovascular screening for high cholesterol and other blood fat levels; and
- Diabetes screening tests.

In addition to these items, Congress has successfully added the following preventive measures to Medicare, most since 1995^a:

- Colorectal cancer screening;
- Prostate cancer screening;
- Cervical and vaginal cancer screening through pelvic exams and Pap smears;
- Breast cancer screening through mammograms;
- Osteoporosis screening through bone mass measurement;
- Glaucoma screening;
- Diabetes self-management training and supplies;
- Nutrition therapy; and
- Flu, pneumococcal and Hepatitis B shots.

^aCoverage of Pap smears began in 1990 and coverage of mammograms began in 1991.