

August is National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM)! The goal of NIAM is to increase awareness about immunizations across the life span, from infants to the elderly. Getting immunized is a lifelong effort regardless of age, sex, race, ethnic background or country of origin. As parents prepare their children for school, students enter college and healthcare workers prepare for the upcoming flu season, the month of August and NIAM present an excellent opportunity to remind individuals that they can help protect themselves, their families, friends and their communities from serious, life-threatening infections by staying up-to-date with their immunizations.

Medicare helps beneficiaries with the cost of adult immunizations by providing coverage for pneumococcal, influenza and hepatitis B vaccines. Medicare covers the cost of pneumococcal and influenza vaccines and their administration by recognized providers. No beneficiary co-insurance or co-payment applies and a beneficiary does not have to meet his or her deductible to receive an influenza or pneumococcal immunization. Medicare also covers hepatitis B vaccination for persons at high or intermediate risk. The coinsurance or co-payment applies for hepatitis B vaccination after the yearly deductible has been met.

How Can You Help?

As a health care professional, you play an important role in helping your Medicare patients and others understand the importance of disease prevention through immunizations. Your recommendation is one the most important factors in increasing immunization rates among people with Medicare. Be aware of the recommended vaccines for adults of all ages and particularly seniors. Encourage your Medicare patients to stay up-to-date on recommended vaccines including those adult immunizations covered by Medicare (an annual influenza vaccination, a pneumococcal vaccination and the hepatitis B vaccination (for beneficiaries at high to intermediate risk)) by encouraging utilization of these benefits as appropriate.

For More Information

- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has developed a variety of provider education and outreach resources to help providers and suppliers to learn more about Medicare's coverage, coding, billing and reimbursement of influenza, pneumococcal, and hepatitis B immunizations. Resources include:
 - The Guide to Preventive Services for Providers, Physicians, Suppliers and Other Health Care Professionals
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/mps_guide_web-061305.pdf
 - Quick Reference Information: Medicare Part B Immunization Billing Chart
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/qr_immun_bill.pdf
 - Adult Immunizations Brochure
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/downloads/Adult_Immunization.pdf
 - The MLN Preventive Services Educational Products Web Page
http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MLNProducts/35_PreventiveServices.asp
- For information to share with your Medicare patients, please visit www.medicare.gov on the Web.
- To learn more about National Immunization Awareness Month, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niam/default.htm#add> on the Web.

Thank you for supporting the effort to increase awareness and promote utilization of vaccines that can prevent infectious disease and save lives.