

What You Need to Know About Medicare & Diabetes

An Update from the [National Diabetes Education Program](#)



There is good news from Medicare for people with diabetes – and those at risk for the disease. Over the past few years, several changes in benefits have been made. Here is an update to help you get the most out of Medicare.

What is Medicare?

Medicare is health insurance for people age 65 or older, under age 65 with certain disabilities, and any age with end-stage renal disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant). To get the most from their benefits, people need to learn what Medicare offers. Here is a brief overview of the Medicare benefits for people with or at risk for diabetes. To learn more, visit www.medicare.gov or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), or read [“Medicare & You 2008.”](#)

Benefits for People with Diabetes

People with diabetes can tap into several Medicare benefits to help manage their diabetes. These benefits will help with day-to-day care of diabetes. Everyone who has Medicare insurance has access to **Medicare Part B-covered benefits** for which they pay a monthly premium. If a person with diabetes has a **prescription** from their doctor, Medicare Part B will cover part of the cost for:

- diabetes self-management training to learn how to manage diabetes – provided through an accredited diabetes self-management education program for a total of 10 hours of initial training within a 12-month period and up to two hours of follow-up training in each subsequent year;
- medical nutrition therapy services provided by a registered dietitian or nutritional professional;
- therapeutic shoes to protect feet from injury;
- diabetes self-testing equipment and supplies; and
- insulin pumps and the insulin used in the pumps.

A doctor’s prescription for diabetes equipment and supplies should say:

- that the person has diabetes;
- how often they need to test their blood glucose;
- how many test strips and lancets they need;
- what kind of meter they need (such as a special meter for low vision); and
- whether or not they use insulin.

Keep in mind that people with diabetes:

- Can pick up their supplies at a supplier that is enrolled in Medicare.
- Can order supplies from a medical equipment supplier to be delivered to their homes, but they must be the one to order them.
- Can request refills of diabetes supplies. They should not accept shipments that they did not order.
- Will need a new prescription for lancets and strips every year.

Other Part B benefits for people with diabetes that **do not need a prescription** include:

- a “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam provided during the first 12 months after enrollment in Part B;
- a foot exam every six months by a podiatrist or other foot care specialist – if nerve damage is present in either foot;
- a dilated eye exam – every year;

- glaucoma screening– every year;
- cholesterol testing; and
- all flu and pneumococcal pneumonia shots.

People who have a **Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (Part D)** may be covered in part for certain **diabetes medications**. People with diabetes should check with their health care team about whether Medicare covers their medications.

Other Medicare benefits for **people at risk for type 2 diabetes** include:

- a “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam provided during the first 12 months after enrollment in Part B;
- diabetes screening for patients who are obese or overweight or have high blood glucose, high blood pressure, cholesterol problems, or other risk factors – up to two fasting blood glucose tests in a 12-month period; and
- cardiovascular screening for lipid problems – every five years.

To Learn More

Here are some resources to help you learn more about Medicare and ways to manage and prevent diabetes:

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
 1-800–MEDICARE (1-800–633–4227), available in English and Spanish
 1-877–486–2048 for TTY users
www.medicare.gov

For more details about Medicare benefits and diabetes, ask for the booklet called [“Medicare Coverage of Diabetes Supplies & Services.”](#)

For information about accredited diabetes self-management education programs:

American Diabetes Association
 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383)
www.diabetes.org/education/edustate2.asp

Indian Health Service
 1-505-248-4182
www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Diabetes

To find a dietitian, Medicare recipients should ask their health care team or contact:

American Dietetic Association
 1-800-366-1655
www.eatright.org and click on “Find a Nutrition Professional”

For more information about diabetes and to download or order free diabetes [prevention](#) and [control](#) resources for older adults, contact the National Diabetes Education Program at www.YourDiabetesInfo.org or call 1-888-693-NDEP (6337); TTY: 1-866-569-1162.

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