

Seasonal Influenza and Diabetes Awareness

November is National Diabetes Month and also a time when flu activity usually increases. Even if diabetes is well managed, flu illness can cause serious complications for someone with diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that now is an opportune time to take action to combat the flu. Health care providers are encouraged to get a flu vaccine to help protect themselves from the influenza and to keep from spreading it to their family, co-workers, and patients. In addition, now is the perfect time for providers to vaccinate Medicare beneficiaries, as it can take 2 weeks after vaccination to develop antibodies that protect against seasonal influenza. Influenza vaccination is especially important for Medicare beneficiaries who suffer from diabetes, due to a weakened immune system and increased susceptibility to respiratory infections such as influenza and pneumonia.

As a health care provider, you play an important role in setting an example by getting yourself vaccinated, and recommending and promoting influenza vaccination. The CDC recommends that you assess vaccination status with each patient visit, encourage seasonal influenza vaccination, and vaccinate or refer to a vaccine provider when appropriate.

Generally, Medicare Part B covers one influenza vaccination and its administration per influenza season for Medicare beneficiaries without co-pay or deductible. *Note:* The influenza vaccine is not a Part D-covered drug.

For more information on coverage and billing of the influenza vaccine and its administration, visit:

- [MLN Matters® Article #MM8890](#), "Influenza Vaccine Payment Allowances - Annual Update for 2014-2015 Season."
- [MLN Matters® Article #SE1431](#), "2014-2015 Influenza (Flu) Resources for Health Care Professionals."
- CDC [Influenza \(Flu\)](#) web page for the latest information on flu including the CDC 2014-2015 recommendations for the prevention and control of influenza.
- While some providers may offer flu vaccines, those that don't can help their patients locate flu vaccines within their local community. The [HealthMap Vaccine Finder](#) is a free online service where users can search for locations offering flu and other adult vaccines. If you provide vaccination services and would like to be included in the HealthMap Vaccine Finder database, [register](#) for an account to submit your information in the database