

10 Free Services Medicare Provides

These preventive checkups help you maintain control of your health care

by Dena Bunis, [AARP](#), November 21, 2017|Comments: 29



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People who have had Medicare Part B for longer than 12 months are eligible for a free wellness exam.

[En español](#) | The phrase “there is no free lunch” certainly applies to [Medicare](#). While the federal program pays the lion’s share of medical costs, beneficiaries can still spend thousands of dollars each year on premiums, deductibles, copays and other out-of-pocket expenses.

But the Affordable Care Act (ACA) expanded access to free preventive care, and that included some important Medicare services. Here's a list of some examinations and screenings Medicare recipients now get for free.

- **A “Welcome to Medicare” preventive visit.** This is available only in the first 12 months you are on Part B. It includes a review of your medical history, certain screenings and shots, measurements of vital signs, a simple vision test, review of potential risk for depression, an offer to discuss advance directives and a written plan outlining which screenings, shots and other preventive services you need. This visit is covered one time.
- **Annual wellness visit.** You're eligible for this free exam if you've had Medicare Part B for longer than 12 months. The physician will review your medical history; update your list of providers and medications; measure your height, weight, blood pressure and other vital signs; and provide you with personalized health advice and treatment options.

Note: While this visit is free, the doctor may order other tests or procedures for which you might have a deductible or copay.

- **Mammogram.** An annual screening mammogram is free. If you require a diagnostic mammogram, you'll pay a 20 percent copay and the Part B deductible will apply.
- **Colonoscopy.** A screening colonoscopy once every 24 months is free if you're at high risk for colorectal cancer. If you aren't at high risk, Medicare covers this test once every 10 years.
- **Diabetes screening.** You're eligible for two free screenings each year if you have a history of high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol levels, are obese or have a history of high blood sugar levels. The screenings will also be free if two or more of these issues apply to you: You are over 65, are overweight or have a family history of diabetes, or you had diabetes when you were pregnant.
- **Prostate cancer screening.** An annual PSA test is free. A digital rectal exam will cost you 20 percent of the Medicare-approved amount plus the doctor's services related to the exam. The Part B deductible also applies.
- **Vaccines.** Annual flu shots, vaccines to prevent pneumococcal infections such as pneumonia, and shots for hepatitis B (for those at high or medium risk) are covered free of charge.

Note: The shingles vaccine is not covered by Part A or Part B, but it may be covered by your Medicare Advantage (MA) plan or your Part D prescription drug plan.

- **Cardiovascular disease (behavioral therapy).** As a Medicare recipient, you also get a free yearly visit with your primary care provider to help you lower your risk for cardiovascular disease.
- **Lung cancer screening.** An annual test with low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) is free if you are between 55 and 77, don't have any signs of lung cancer, are a smoker or have quit in the past 15 years, and you have a tobacco smoking

history of at least 30 “pack years” (meaning you smoked an average of one pack a day for 30 years).

- **Depression screening.** A yearly screening is free if conducted in a primary care center where follow-up and referrals are available. Copays may apply for follow-up care.

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