

Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act: Commonly Asked Questions from Capitol Hill

Q: What does the Preventing Diabetes in Medicare Act do?

A: Currently, Medicare only covers medical nutrition therapy for beneficiaries with diabetes or renal disease. H.R. 1686 would expand coverage to individuals with prediabetes, or at risk for diabetes, which would help prevent cases of diabetes among the Medicare population.

Q: What is medical nutrition therapy?

A: Medical nutrition therapy is defined as the use of specific nutrition services to treat an illness, injury, or condition and involves two phases: 1) assessment of the nutritional status of the client, and 2) treatment, which includes nutrition therapy, counseling, and the use of specialized nutrition supplements. The 4 key phases for effective MNT are: 1) an *assessment* of the patient's nutrition and diabetes self-management knowledge and skills; 2) identification and negotiation of individually designed nutrition *goals*; 3) nutrition *intervention* involving a careful match of both a meal-planning approach and educational materials to the patient's needs, with flexibility in mind to have the plan be implemented by the patient; and 4) *evaluation* of outcomes and ongoing monitoring.

Q: How many people in my state have diabetes and/or prediabetes?

A: A table showing the number of people with diabetes in each state and district can be found at the following website: <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/atlas/countydata/atlas.html>. Unfortunately the number of people with prediabetes is not available, but most members of Congress still appreciate how many people in their district are affected by diabetes.

Q: How does Medicare currently cover medical nutrition therapy?

A: MNT is reimbursable for Medicare Part B recipients with:

- Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes
- Gestational Diabetes
- Non-Dialysis Kidney Disease including patients who are status post renal transplant (6 to 36 months)

Patients must be seen as outpatients and coverage includes 3 hours the 1st year for initial MNT and 2 hours per year in follow-up MNT

Q: I hear about a lot of different pieces of diabetes legislation. Why is this bill important?

A: There are several pieces of diabetes legislation that have been introduced in the 114th Congress, which aim to improve both prevention and care of diabetes. Due to the severity of comorbid diseases and disability associated with diabetes, it is imperative to address diabetes using every evidence-based tool at our disposal. Furthermore, MNT is an evidence-based, effective intervention to prevent or delay diabetes in people with prediabetes.