

**February is American Heart Month** ~ Since 1999, the rate of deaths from coronary heart disease and stroke in American has declined. While much progress has been achieved in reducing the death rate, heart disease and stroke still remain the number 1 and number 3 causes of death in the U.S., and a major cause of disability and reduced quality of life. Found more often among people aged 65 or older, heart disease is largely preventable. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is taking this opportunity to remind health care professionals that Medicare beneficiaries are covered for certain cardiovascular screening blood tests. This screening can help beneficiaries learn if they have an increased risk of heart disease and stroke.

Medicare provides coverage of the following cardiovascular screening blood tests for the early detection of cardiovascular disease or abnormalities associated with an elevated risk of heart disease and stroke:

- Total Cholesterol Test
- Cholesterol Test for High-density Lipoproteins
- Triglycerides Test

Coverage of cardiovascular screening blood tests is provided as a Medicare Part B benefit. The beneficiary will pay nothing for the blood tests (there is no coinsurance or copayment and no deductible for this benefit).

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***IMPORTANT NOTE:*** *The cardiovascular screening benefit covered by Medicare is a stand alone billable service separate from the Initial Preventive Physical Examination or Welcome to Medicare Visit and **does not** have to be obtained within the first six months of a beneficiary's Medicare Part B coverage.*