



HEALTH INDUSTRY DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION
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“Improving immunization is a key element of our quality improvement strategy—a strategy that is focused on preventing illnesses and complications in the first place.”

Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D., Administrator of CMS.



NURSING HOMES REQUIRED TO GIVE FLU SHOTS

THE NEW RULE

A new CMS rule requires nursing homes serving Medicare and Medicaid patients to provide immunizations against influenza and pneumococcal disease to all residents.

As a condition of participation in the two programs, nursing homes will be required to ensure that residents receive the immunizations. Resident or their families can refuse the shots. Residents who cannot receive the vaccines for medical reasons are also exempt. Nursing homes will be required to educate residents and/or their families about the advantages and possible disadvantages of receiving the vaccines.

About 2 million Americans, most age 65 years or older, live in long-term care facilities. This same age group accounts for more than 90 percent of influenza-related deaths in the United States.

CMS is also encouraging nursing homes to provide influenza vaccine to their healthcare workers; although vaccination for these workers will not be required. Research from last year’s flu season revealed that only 36 percent of all healthcare workers were vaccinated against the illness.

A 1999 national nursing home survey showed that 65 percent of residents had documented influenza shots and only 38 percent had been inoculated against bacterial pneumonia. A goal of this final rule is to attain a target rate of 90 percent for both vaccinations.

SUMMARY OF RULE

As a Medicare condition of participation, the rule requires that long-term care facilities ensure that each resident is:

- offered influenza immunization annually;
- immunized against influenza unless medically contraindicated or when the resident or the resident’s legal representative refuses immunization;
- offered pneumococcal immunization once if there is no history of immunization; and
- immunized against pneumococcal disease unless medically contraindicated or when the resident or the resident’s legal representative refuses immunization.

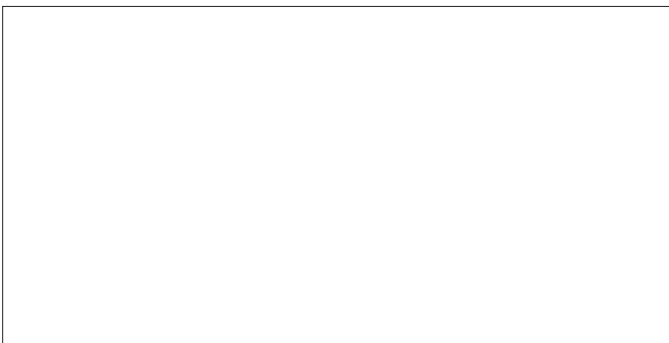
PAYMENT RATES INCREASED

In January, as an added incentive to increase immunization rates, CMS increased the average Medicare payment rate for administering each shot from \$8 to \$18. This is in addition to a separate payment for the cost of the vaccine. Medicaid payment rates are set independently by each state.

IF VACCINE SHORTAGE OCCURS

In the case of a vaccine shortage as declared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state survey agencies would have the discretion to not cite facilities for being out-of-compliance with this requirement.

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