

Seniors: Take Aim Against Silent Killers

(NAPSA)—If you're age 65 or older, odds are you have a chronic condition. According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, about 80 percent of seniors in the U.S. have at least one chronic condition. The most common chronic conditions among seniors are "silent killers"—diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease that often have no physical symptoms. Despite their silent nature, these conditions may result in life-threatening complications, disability and significant costs if not properly managed.

"A chronic condition like diabetes or heart disease should not be taken lightly," says Rhonda Randall, D.O., geriatrician and chief medical officer, UnitedHealthcare Medicare & Retirement. "It's important to get screened for these illnesses annually, even if you don't have symptoms. If you have a chronic condition, educate yourself and take action to help reduce your risk of serious complications."

Know your risk factors: Everything from your age, gender and genetics to your diet and exercise affect your risk for chronic conditions. Having regular doctor visits and preventive screenings can help manage potential risks. Medicare covers the cost of many preventive services for people with chronic conditions, including an annual wellness visit at no co-pay.

Reset your lifestyle: Simple diet and exercise changes can help reduce your risk of health complications. If you live a sedentary lifestyle, get back into an activity you enjoy doing. Review the services offered by your health plan. Many Medicare Advantage plans offer additional benefits and services to help members live healthier lifestyles, including nutritionist counseling, wellness programs and gym memberships. If you smoke, get out your calendar and circle the day you plan to quit today. Medicare now covers counseling for smoking cessation support.



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Have a plan: If you have a chronic condition, good self-management skills may help make the difference between a healthier life and regular visits to the emergency room. Talk with a health professional about what you need to do to manage your condition, develop a treatment plan and set specific goals. Share your plan with family and friends.

Consider specialized Medicare coverage: Medicare Advantage Special Needs Plans cover all the services under Original Medicare plus additional benefits and services that may help beneficiaries with chronic conditions live a healthier life. For example, UnitedHealthcare offers plans for Medicare beneficiaries with diabetes, heart failure and/or chronic lung disorders. By working with members and their physicians to coordinate care, Special Needs Plans have been shown to improve health care outcomes among beneficiaries with chronic conditions.

Learn More

For more information on Medicare options for those with chronic conditions, visit www.MedicareMadeClear.com.

For information on how to protect against silent killer diseases, visit the American Heart Association at www.Heart.org.

Information on Medicare preventive services may be found at www.Medicare.gov.