

# News For Older Americans

## New Benefits May Help Keep Seniors Healthier

(NAPSA)—Staying healthy just got a little easier if you're 65 or older.

That's because Medicare now covers many wellness and preventive services free of charge. Older Americans can get important screenings, immunizations and an annual "wellness" checkup without spending a dime, under provisions in the Affordable Care Act that took effect in January 2011.

"These services have the potential to add years to your life—and the life of your loved ones," said AARP board member and geriatric specialist William J. Hall, M.D. "We urge older Americans to get all the preventive services their doctors recommend."

For the first time, Medicare will pay entirely for a host of vital screenings—for colon and other cancers, diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis and other chronic conditions.

On top of that, Medicare now covers a yearly "wellness" exam that can spotlight steps you need to take to take charge of your health. As part of this checkup, you can work with your doctor on developing your own prevention plan.

These new benefits can make a difference in people's lives, because they enable older Americans to get the preventive care they need without worrying about cost. Research has shown that individuals are less likely to get health screenings when they have to pay for them.

Many older Americans have not been getting important preventive services, according to the



**New wellness and preventive services, such as screenings and immunizations, have the potential to add years to seniors' lives.**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For example, millions of older people at risk for diabetes and colorectal cancer have not been screened for those illnesses. Similarly, millions of older Americans have not received a vaccine for pneumococcal disease, even though research shows that the risk of developing the diseases increases with age and the presence of chronic conditions.

When it comes to staying well, most people know they should eat right, get exercise and keep their weight in check. Now, many can add a new item to the list by taking advantage of Medicare's new benefits for preventive services. Such services could save your life.

To learn more about preventive services in Medicare, click on [www.aarp.org/healthscreenings](http://www.aarp.org/healthscreenings). And for more information about the health law, visit [www.aarp.org/getthefacts](http://www.aarp.org/getthefacts).