

Sample Blog on USPSTF Diabetes Screening Guideline

Free Prediabetes/Diabetes Screening and Prevention Programs Available to Patients Beginning January 2017

New guidelines require all private health plans to cover free screening and prevention programs

Coverage for prediabetes/diabetes screening and participation in diabetes prevention programs – with no cost-sharing for patients – is set to go into effect in January 2017. The requirement that all private health plans cover screening and prevention is the result of updated guidelines released by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) in October 2015. The [updated guidelines](#) on screening for abnormal blood glucose and type 2 diabetes recommends clinicians screen for abnormal blood glucose (prediabetes) and type 2 diabetes in individuals aged 40 to 70 years old who do not have symptoms of diabetes and are overweight or obese. The USPSTF further recommends clinicians screen patients younger than 40 if they have one or more of the following characteristics:

- family history of diabetes;
- history of gestational diabetes (GDM) or polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS); or
- African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian American, Hispanic or Latino, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

In addition, USPSTF recommends clinicians offer or refer patients found to have prediabetes to intensive behavioral counseling interventions to promote a healthful diet and physical activity.

Coverage Implications for Private Insurance

It's important that health care professionals and patients understand how the USPSTF guideline impacts private health insurance coverage. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires private health insurers to cover USPSTF recommendations rated "A" or "B" at no cost to patients; the prediabetes/diabetes recommendation received a "B" rating. ***Thus beginning January 2017, health plans are required to cover, at no cost to the patient, screening for prediabetes and diabetes as well as participation in intensive behavioral counseling interventions (i.e. diabetes prevention programs) for individuals screened and determined to have prediabetes.***

Key Takeaway

Nearly 3 times more adults are eligible for screening under the new USPSTF recommendation compared to the 2008 version. The new, comprehensive guideline has the potential to detect most cases of undiagnosed prediabetes and diabetes especially in racial and ethnic minorities who are disproportionately impacted by the disease. Access to free screening and evidence-based diabetes prevention programs has the potential to change the trajectory of the diabetes epidemic in our country and make a positive difference in the lives of millions of people living with diabetes or at risk of developing the disease. For more information, visit www.diabetesadvocacyalliance.org/screening.html.