

16 Free Health Services From Medicare

“Good health and good sense are life’s greatest blessings.” This wise observation—offered by Roman writer Publilius Syrus more than 2,000 years ago—still rings true. If you are a senior or have been approved for Social Security disability benefits and are covered by Medicare, you can be proactive in improving your health by using your good sense to make the most of the free tests and services offered under a federal healthcare law.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sums it up this way: “The best way to stay healthy is to

live a healthy lifestyle. You can live a healthy lifestyle and prevent disease by exercising, eating well, keeping a healthy weight, and not smoking. Medicare can help. Medicare pays for many preventive services to keep you healthy.”

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) expanded access to free preventive care, and that included some important Medicare services. AARP says this includes two important medical exam offerings:

1. **“A ‘Welcome to Medicare’ preventive visit.** This is available only in the first 12 months you are on Part B. It includes a review of your medical history, certain screenings and shots, measurements of vital signs, a simple vision test, review of potential risk for depression, an offer to discuss advance directives and a written plan outlining which screenings, shots and other preventive services you need. This visit is covered one time.
2. **Annual wellness visit.** You’re eligible for this free exam if you’ve had Medicare Part B for longer than 12 months. The physician will review your medical history; update your list of providers and medications; measure your height, weight, blood pressure and other vital signs; and provide you with personalized



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health advice and treatment options. (Note: While this visit is free, the doctor may order other tests or procedures for which you might have a deductible or co-pay.)”

Kaiser Health News (writing in collaboration with the *Washington Post*) says the following 14 tests are available for free to Medicare beneficiaries—no co-payments, co-insurance or deductibles—when provided by health-care professionals who accept Medicare.

1. **Annual mammograms** for women 40 and older. (“If you require a diagnostic mammogram, you’ll pay a 20 percent co-pay and the Part B deductible will apply,” AARP reports.)
2. **Cervical cancer screening**, including a Pap smear test and pelvic exam, every two years or annually

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Cuddigan Law
10855 West Dodge Road, Suite #101
Omaha, NE 68154
cuddiganlaw.com
402.933.5318



