December 30, 2020

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

Public Health

CDC publishes brief on emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants

Information about the characteristics of these variants is rapidly emerging. Scientists are working to learn more about how easily they might spread, whether they could cause more severe illness, and whether currently authorized vaccines will protect people against them. Currently, there is no evidence that these variants cause more severe illness or increased risk of death.

Read more

Strategies for optimizing the supply of PPE during shortages

This quick guide, updated on December 29, summarizes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's strategies to optimize personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies in health care settings.
Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 vaccination

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is working with partners on flexible COVID-19 vaccination programs that can accommodate different vaccines and scenarios. Here are the answers to commonly asked questions.

FDA Commissioner and experts discuss COVID-19 vaccines

In this 30-minute video discussion, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn joins the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) Director Dr. Peter Marks, WebMD Chief Medical Officer Dr. John Whyte, and Scripps Research Endowed Chair of Innovative Medicine Dr. Eric Topol, to talk about what we know, what we don't know, and what we might learn in the future about COVID-19 vaccines.

Practice Management

New COVID-19 Treatments Add-on Payment

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued an Interim Final Rule with Comment Period that established the New COVID-19 Treatments Add-on Payment under the Medicare Inpatient Prospective Payment System, effective from November 2, 2020, until the end of the public health emergency. To mitigate potential financial disincentives for hospitals to provide new COVID-19 treatments during the emergency, Medicare will provide an enhanced payment for eligible inpatient cases that
involve certain products with FDA approval or emergency use authorization to treat COVID-19.

Read more

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CMS changes Medicare payment to support faster COVID-19 diagnostic testing

Starting January 1, 2021, Medicare will pay $100 only to laboratories that complete high throughput COVID-19 diagnostic tests within two calendar days of the specimen being collected. Additionally, Medicare will pay $75 to laboratories that take longer than two days to complete these tests. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is working to ensure that patients who test positive for the virus are alerted quickly so they can self-isolate and receive medical treatment.

Read more

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UnitedHealthcare: Summary of COVID-19 dates by program

Linked below is a quick reference guide from UnitedHealthcare that outlines the beginning and end dates of temporary program/process or procedure changes implemented because of COVID-19.

Read more

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Tufts Health Plan vaccine update

Tufts Health Plan will cover the vaccine in full. There will be no cost to members. Refer to the COVID-19 Vaccination Payment Policy and the COVID-19 Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Providers for additional information.
Steps to prepare your practice for COVID-19 vaccination

Unsure how to ready your practice for COVID-19 vaccination? The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) encourages you to follow these first steps:

- Identify the lead person at your practice for COVID-19 vaccination planning and implementation.
- Register with the Massachusetts Immunization Information System (MIIS). You can confirm registration at miishelpdesk@mass.gov.
- Once MIIS is completed, submit an electronically signed Mass. COVID-19 Vaccination Program (MCVP) enrollment form. You can confirm that your facility has signed and electronically submitted the MCVP enrollment form by contacting the DPH Vaccine Unit at dph-vaccine-management@massmail.state.ma.us.
- For FAQ about the enrollment form, click here.

The MMS is aware that hospitals, health centers, and some of the larger multispecialty group practices received the first round of the vaccine. The DPH anticipates that the next cohort will include private practicing non-affiliated COVID-facing primary care practices and their staff.

For details about the MCVP Guidance for Healthcare Providers and Organizations, click here.