May 12, 2021

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

Adriane Labs creates vaccine hesitancy toolkit

A new conversation toolkit is intended to help health care providers navigate discussions about COVID-19 vaccination with their patients. The toolkit provides a common framework for engaging in these important conversations, with an emphasis on listening and learning. Download the COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Toolkit, which contains:

- Best practices for having vaccination conversations
- Suggested language for responding to patient questions
- A patient-oriented COVID-19 Vaccine Handout that addresses the most common concerns about the vaccine

How and where to refer patients for COVID-19 vaccine
Even if not administering COVID-19 vaccine, physicians play a critical role in helping patients understand the importance of COVID-19 vaccination. Key messaging includes helping patients understand that all three COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective, and they all prevent severe illness, hospitalization and death. To help with these conversations, please see these resources:

- Making a Strong Recommendation for COVID-19 Vaccination
- Trust the Facts, Get the Vax campaign materials in multiple languages
- COVID-19 Vaccination Locations to help your patients find out where to get vaccinated

US Food and Drug Administration expands emergency use authorization (EUA) for Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 to include adolescents 12 through 15 years of age. The FDA amended the EUA originally issued on Dec. 11, 2020 for administration in individuals 16 years of age and older. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted today, May 12, to endorse expanded usage of Pfizer’s and BioNTech’s Covid-19 vaccine for 12- to 15-year-old kids, clearing the way for pediatricians to start giving out the shots across the U.S. as early as Thursday. The links below provide further information.

- MA DPH COVID-19 vaccinations for people under age 18 Information and Resources
- Boston Children’s Hospital COVID-19 Vaccination Information for Kids & Teens
COVID-19 Medicare Part B advanced payment, repayment and recoupment process

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently began automatic recoupment of COVID-19 Accelerated and Advance Payments, which were an advance of up to three months of Medicare payments to help physician practices keep the lights on early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the revised repayment terms, physicians should be aware that:

- These funds are loans that are required to be repaid.
- Repayment begins one year from when the Medicare advance payment is received, rather than 120 days under the original terms.
- The per claim recoupment amount was reduced from 100% to 25% for the first 11 months, and then 50% for an additional six months.
- If there is an outstanding balance after the 17-month recoupment time frame, the Medicare Administrative Contractor (MAC) will issue a demand letter requiring repayment subject to an interest rate of 4%, a decrease from the original interest rate of 10.25%.
- Physicians may repay the Medicare advance payment in full at any time by contacting their MAC.

Watch this video to address common questions.

CMS increases Medicare payment for COVID-10 monoclonal antibody infusions

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has increased the Medicare payment rate for administering monoclonal antibodies to treat beneficiaries with COVID-19, continuing coverage under the Medicare Part B COVID-19 vaccine benefit.
Beneficiaries pay nothing out of pocket, regardless of where the service is furnished – including in a physician’s office, health care facility, or at home.

Effective May 6, the national average payment rate will increase from $310 to $450 for most health care settings. In support of providers’ efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19, CMS will also establish a higher national payment rate of $750 when monoclonal antibodies are administered in the beneficiary’s home, including the beneficiary’s permanent residence or temporary lodging (e.g., hotel/motel, cruise ship, hostel, or homeless shelter).

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