

BETTER DIABETES MANAGEMENT

Understand Your Medicare Options

(NAPSA)—With the shrinking healthcare dollar, it's important for people with diabetes to be their own best advocate—and be knowledgeable about all aspects of their diabetes care. By doing so, patients may be better able to manage their disease, as well as handle the administrative aspects required for optimal treatment.

Fortunately, there is a wealth of information available today to help people learn to advocate for themselves. For example, *Taking Control of Your Diabetes* (Professional Communications, \$12.95) by Steven V. Edelman, MD, Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Diego, teaches patients to take care of their health in a way that makes sense for them.

"Empowering people with information about how best to manage their diabetes and informing them about their Medicare benefit rights is critical to helping them improve the quality of their lives," says Dr. Edelman, who has been living with diabetes himself for more than 30 years.

About 4.2 million Americans with diabetes have Medicare Part B coverage, and if you're one of them, it's important that you be aware of the following points:

- You have coverage for blood glucose meters, test strips, lancets and other testing supplies, regardless of whether or not you use insulin. Coverage is subject, of course, to certain conditions, limitations and co-pays.

- While a doctor's prescription is required, Medicare covers all brands of blood glucose testing supplies, regardless of manufacturer. Though some testing supply distributors may try to switch you to a product other than the one recommended by your healthcare professional, be assured that all brands are covered. If you're told that they're not, you should consider finding another store or distributor.

- After you pay your annual deductible, the following payment



Diabetes patients should take advantage of their Medicare benefits.

rules apply: If you buy supplies from a store or distributor that takes assignment, you only need to pay a 20 percent co-pay. If you buy supplies from a store or distributor that does not accept assignment, you will need to pay full price at purchase, but Medicare will later send you an 80 percent reimbursement.

Just as important as knowing your Medicare options is knowing that frequent blood glucose testing is a key component of diabetes management. Yet some people are reluctant to test because the procedure is inconvenient or uncomfortable. Fortunately, there are now products available that are providing some relief.

For example, the new ONE TOUCH® Ultra Meter from LifeScan requires such a small drop of blood that people can test on their arm, where there are fewer nerve endings than in the fingertips, making testing significantly less painful for many people. (Be sure to read your owner's manual and talk to your healthcare professional before you begin arm-testing.) The meter also provides accurate test results in just five seconds.

To learn more about Medicare coverage, you can call LifeScan at 1-800-227-8862. For more information about *Taking Control of Your Diabetes*, or to order a copy, call 1-800-998-2693 or visit www.TCOYD.org.