



In Iowa's Interest: More Than 160,000 Medicare Beneficiaries Access Free Preventive Services under Health Reform

by Senator Tom Harkin

Many Iowans know that in crafting the Affordable Care Act – the landmark health reform law – one of my primary goals as Chairman of the U.S. Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee was to increase access to preventive care. Numerous studies have shown the benefits of preventive services, both in reducing chronic disease and in lowering health care costs. Well, according to new data released this month by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Iowans on Medicare are taking advantage of these new opportunities to access preventive care.

In just the first five months of 2012, the Affordable Care Act has helped 164,636 Iowans with original Medicare receive at least one preventive service at no cost to them. This also includes 10,841 who have taken advantage of the free Annual Wellness Visit provided by the Affordable Care Act.

Nationally, more than 14 million seniors have received at least one preventive service, including 1.1 million who benefited from the Annual Wellness Visit.

Under the Affordable Care Act, preventive benefits are offered free of charge to beneficiaries, with no deductible or co-pay, so that cost is no longer a barrier for seniors who want to stay healthy and treat problems early. The law also added an important new service for people with Medicare – an Annual Wellness Visit with the doctor of their choice – at no cost to the beneficiary.

What this means is that Iowans on Medicare can access cancer screenings, mammograms, and other preventive services to help them stay healthy and lower their health care costs by giving them the tools to take charge of their own health and prevent health problems. I encourage all eligible Medicare beneficiaries to take advantage of these new benefits.

To learn more about Medicare-covered preventive services, please visit: <http://www.healthcare.gov/law/features/65-older/medicare-preventive-services/index.html>.

To learn what screenings, vaccinations and other preventive services doctors recommend, please visit the my-healthfinder tool at www.healthfinder.gov.