

Health care law gives women control over their care, offers free preventive services to 47 million women

Written by

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The eight new prevention-related services are:

- Well-woman visits.
- Gestational diabetes screening that helps protect pregnant women from one of the most serious pregnancy-related diseases.
- Domestic and interpersonal violence screening and counseling.
- FDA-approved contraceptive methods, and contraceptive education and counseling.
- Breastfeeding support, supplies, and counseling.
- HPV DNA testing, for women 30 or older.
- Sexually transmitted infections counseling for sexually-active women.
- HIV screening and counseling for sexually-active women.

The health care law has already helped women in private plans and Medicare for the first time gain access to potentially life-saving tests and services, such as mammograms, cholesterol screenings, and flu shots without coinsurance or deductibles. Today's announcement builds on these benefits, generally requiring insurance companies to offer, with no copay, additional vital screenings and tests to help keep women healthy throughout their lives.

These services are based on recommendations from the Institute of Medicine, which relied on independent physicians, nurses, scientists, and other experts as well as evidence-based research to develop its recommendations. These preventive services will be offered without cost sharing beginning today in all new health plans.

Group health plans and issuers that have maintained grandfathered status are not required to cover these services. In addition, certain nonprofit religious organizations, such as churches and schools, are not required to cover these services. The Obama administration will continue to work with all employers to give them the flexibility and resources they need to implement the health care law in a way that protects women's health while making common-sense accommodations for values like religious liberty.

For women who are pregnant or nursing, the new preventive services include gestational diabetes screening as well as breast-feeding support, counseling and supplies. Health services already provided under the health care law include folic acid supplements for women who may become pregnant, Hepatitis B screening for pregnant women, and anemia screening for pregnant women.

Women Medicare beneficiaries may already receive such preventive services as annual

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wellness visits, mammograms, and bone mass measurement for those at risk of osteoporosis and diabetes screening. Approximately 24.7 million women with Medicare used at least one free preventive service in 2011, including the new annual wellness visit.

Because of the Affordable Care Act, secure, affordable coverage is becoming a reality for millions of American women and families. Men and children are also able to take advantage of preventive services at no extra charge under the health care law. These services include flu shots and other immunizations, screenings for cancers, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and depression.

To learn more about the health care services you may be eligible for at no extra charge under the Affordable Care Act, go to <http://www.healthcare.gov/prevention>

For information about the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report on the number of adult and adolescent women eligible for the preventive services at no charge after Aug. 1, 2012, see <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/2012/womensPreventiveServicesACA/ib.shtml>