

MEDICARE COVERS MEDICATION & COUNSELING FOR TOBACCO CESSATION

The U.S. Public Health Service Clinical Practice Guideline: *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence* recommends the combination of medication and counseling for every patient who uses tobacco. Medicare began covering quit-tobacco medications Jan. 1, 2006 and has covered counseling since March 2005.

Qualified Beneficiaries

Medicare beneficiaries qualify for tobacco treatment benefits if they have a disease or adverse health effect found by the U.S. Surgeon General to be linked to tobacco use (heart disease, lung disease, cerebrovascular disease, certain types of cancer, blood clots, cataracts, weak bones). They also qualify if they are taking a therapeutic agent whose metabolism or dosing is affected by tobacco use, based on FDA-approved information.

Covered Medications

Every drug plan is required by Medicare to cover at least one of the following FDA-approved medications:

- Bupropion SR 150 (generic or Zyban)
- Nicotine inhaler
- Nicotine nasal spray
- Nicotine patch (if "legend" or prescription)
- Varenicline (Chantix)

Covered Counseling

Doctors can at least double quit rates by following the clinical practice guideline recommendation to counsel patients to quit. Medicare covers two individual cessation attempts per year per patient. Each attempt may include a maximum of four intermediate sessions (three-10 minutes) or intensive sessions (more than 10 minutes), with the total annual benefit covering up to eight sessions in a 12 month period.

Providers eligible for reimbursement are physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, qualified psychologists and clinical social workers.

Outpatients: Counseling coverage is available as described above.

Inpatients: Hospitalizations for a tobacco-related disease are eligible for separate reimbursement as described above. Sessions of three minutes or less are included in the evaluation and management of patients under existing Medicare reimbursement.

Know the Billing Codes: **99406**, smoking and tobacco cessation counseling visit, intermediate, 3-10 minutes; **99407**, smoking and tobacco cessation counseling visit, intensive, greater than 10 minutes

Limits: Group therapy, telephone and web-based counseling are NOT covered. However, the [Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line](#) is free and is available to assist all Wisconsin residents who want to quit: **1-800-QUIT-NOW** (800-784-8669); 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily.

For Further Information

1-800-MEDICARE

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/SmokingCessation>

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/center/provider.asp>

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov/mcd/viewdecisionmemo.asp?id=130>

<http://www.medicare.gov/caregivers/>