

## Vaccine Payments under Medicare Plans

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I'm sharing a recent learning experience with billing for a tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (TDAP) vaccine.

For years, I've received vaccines, including "flu shots", at my doctor's office. Recently, I went in for a flu shot and was told I also needed a tetanus shot. Both were administered in the office and billed to my insurance, which is an Anthem Blue Cross Medicare Advantage plan. Insurance paid for the administration of both vaccines and for the influenza vaccine but denied payment for the TDAP vaccine. Puzzled, I began an investigation into Medicare rules, and it yielded these findings:

Medicare Part B, required of all eligible CLPCCD retirees, pays for doctor's office visits and for these specific vaccines only:

- Hepatitis B vaccine (for patients at high or intermediate risk)
- Influenza virus vaccine
- Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine
- Vaccines directly related to the treatment of an injury or direct exposure to a disease or condition

Payment for any other vaccines supplied by your doctor's office will be denied by Part B.

These other vaccines generally will be covered under your Medicare Part D drug plan, but most doctors' offices cannot bill Part D. Only a pharmacy or hospital that supplies the vaccine can bill Part D.

As a consequence, I needed to pay the doctor's billing department \$73 for the TDAP vaccine. I was then able to file a claim form to my Medicare Part D drug plan for reimbursement. The form requires a good bit of detail, some of which is a challenge to obtain: drug NDC number, an 11-digit National Drug Code that is unique to the particular vaccine received, exact drug name, physician NPI number, physician invoice, paid receipt, etc. As an example, [here is the form I completed](#).

Recognizing that this reimbursement process is burdensome, Medicare suggests an alternative wherein the physician provides a vaccine prescription, your pharmacy provides the vaccine, and then it is administered by the pharmacist or delivered to your physician for administration. Under this alternative, the physician bills Part B and the pharmacy bills Part D. This Medicare document fully describes the payment guidelines and administration alternatives: [Vaccine and Vaccine Administration Payments Under Medicare Part D](#)



For a Kaiser Senior Advantage Medicare Plan, the patient's payment experience may be simpler because the doctor's office, pharmacy, and hospital are operated under a single organization which can perform all Medicare billing, potentially avoiding the complications noted above. Nevertheless, [Section 8 of Kaiser's Medicare Advantage Evidence of Coverage](#) describes the very same issues and

payment scenarios and ends with the caution: "You may want to call our Member Services Contact Center before you get a vaccination."

Bottom line:

Your doctor's office can supply and bill Part B for flu, pneumonia, or hepatitis vaccine.

For other vaccines, have the doctor provide a prescription, if needed, to your pharmacy where the vaccine can be provided, administered and charged to your Part D.

Kaiser subscribers may want to call the Member Services Contact Center for guidance before getting a vaccination.