



# The National Mail Order Program for Diabetes Testing Supplies

Tip sheet developed by the AADE Professional Practice Committee

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) Competitive Bidding Program for diabetes testing supplies (DTS) are offered through mail order at a significant cost reduction for both people with diabetes (PWD) and CMS. PWD must be enrolled in Medicare Part B to qualify for mail order service.

Covered DTS include blood glucose meters, replacement batteries for blood glucose meters, control solution, test strips, lancet devices, and lancets. Medicare beneficiaries who wish to have DTS shipped directly to their home must use one of nine contracted mail order suppliers. [Find a list of suppliers by zip code](#). Select the option "Mail-Order Diabetic Supplies." Most suppliers will provide a link listing brands they cover. PWD, however, should be instructed to contact the mail order program for confirmation of brand coverage as well as to place their order.

For people taking insulin, Medicare will cover 300 test strips and lancets (~3 per day) every 3 MONTHS and 1 lancet device every 6 MONTHS. For people who are not taking insulin, Medicare covers 100 test strips and lancets (~1 per day) every 3 MONTHS and 1 lancet device every 6 MONTHS. Extra test strips may be requested by the prescriber documenting medical necessity.

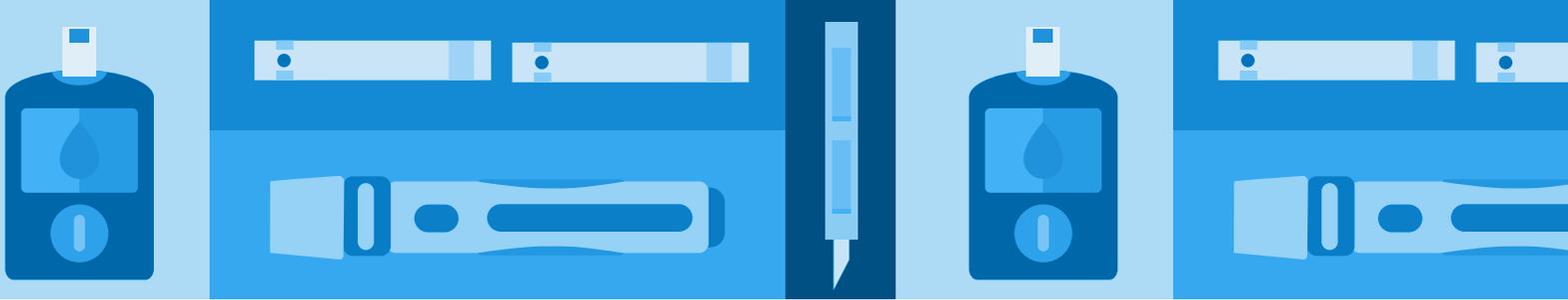
## Why is there cause for concern about this program?

- A recent AADE "secret shopper" survey revealed that currently, most mail-order suppliers do not carry 50% of the blood glucose models covered by the Medicare market shares of DTS, nor was factual information provided about available inventory. This resulted in failure to receive trusted supplies and/or training to use DTS. In some cases, Medicare beneficiaries were offered blood glucose meters that failed to meet current FDA accuracy standards. The FDA revised their guidelines for blood glucose meters in October 2016. [Download the guidelines](#).
- Only one of the blood glucose meters that received a "Seal of Approval" from the Diabetes Technology Society's June 2017 study is currently available through the National Mail Order Program - and by only one supplier.<sup>1</sup> (Please note: a few blood glucose meters came on the market after the study began and were not included.) Even though it's prohibited, suppliers have been known to offer alternate systems other than what was prescribed, a violation of the anti-switching rule.
- Two studies<sup>2,3</sup> showed a direct link to increased mortality and complications, inpatient admission, and supplier costs due to the access issues created by the CMS Competitive Bidding Program.

<sup>1</sup> Sefford, et al. *Seven-year surveillance of the clinical performance of a blood glucose test strip product*. *Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology* (2017) 1-8

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nmqf.org/disruption-in-access-to-diabetes-monitoring-supplies-leads-to-increased-hospitalizations-mortality-among-medicare-beneficiaries/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/diacare/39/7/1078.full.pdf>



## What can diabetes educators do to help PWD?

- Take a moment to explain the National Mail Order Program and how it works: PWD are to receive the DTS prescribed to them via mail order.
- Walk the individual through the CMS website, as it can be overwhelming to navigate.
- When a person requires a particular brand for a medically significant reason (e.g. to avoid an adverse medical outcome), document the rationale in the medical record, and have the prescription written with “NO SUBSTITUTIONS” or the box checked ‘Do not substitute’ on the prescription form. The supplier must provide the prescribed brand, help find another supplier who offers the brand, or work with you to find an alternate brand with a revised written prescription.

If the prescribed brand is not in stock with a mail order supplier, the person should not be required to change brands. If the person is sent incorrect supplies, instruct him/her to call 1-800-MEDICARE or the Fraud Hotline of the HHS Office of Inspector General at 1-800-HHS-TIPS.

If the brand the PWD knows and trusts is not available through the National Mail Supplier Program, they may purchase supplies at their local pharmacy or store where they previously purchased their testing supplies (if the pharmacy accepts Medicare reimbursement and assignment) with a 20% coinsurance after the Part B deductible is met. Encourage PWD to confirm that their pharmacy is Medicare qualified. While this may be slightly more expensive, they can be assured of receiving the prescribed DTS. Reinforce with the person that they cannot receive Medicare covered supplies from both the mail order program and their local pharmacy.

## [Learn more about the National Mail Order Program](#)

