



**SHIIP Monthly Column
February 2016**

**Contact: Kerry Hall
919-807-6011**

Guard Your Heart: Medicare Preventive Benefits

Hearts abound during February. We see heart-shaped candies, red foil heart boxes full of chocolates, heart-shaped balloons, and the list goes on. Did you know that February is also the American Heart Association's American Heart Month?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States, so there is no better time to remind ourselves to take care of our hearts. Every year, one in four deaths is caused by heart disease.

The good news? Heart disease can often be prevented when people make healthy choices and manage their health conditions. Communities, health professionals and families can work together to create opportunities for people to make healthier choices.

Medicare's preventive benefits help you to be proactive with your health to avoid serious illnesses such as heart disease. Covered preventive services include Cardiovascular Screenings, Cardiovascular Disease Behavioral Therapy, Obesity Screening and Counseling, and other services. Preventive services can catch health problems early when treatment works best and can keep you from getting certain diseases or illnesses. Preventive services include exams, lab tests, screenings, vaccines, monitoring and information to help you take care of your health.

Medicare covers preventive care whether you're in Original Medicare or a Medicare Advantage Plan (also known as a private health plan). If you have Original Medicare, you pay no coinsurance or deductible for certain preventive services if you see a provider who participates in Medicare. Medicare Advantage Plans must cover the full cost for preventive services that are free under Original Medicare as long as you follow the plan's rules. Call your plan for details.

If you have questions about Medicare's preventive benefits, including heart-related screenings, contact SHIIP, the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program, at 855-408-1212 to speak with a trained counselor or to request a free brochure. SHIIP is a division of the North Carolina Department of Insurance that assists people with Medicare, Medicare Part D, Medicare supplement, Medicare Advantage and long term care insurance questions. It also helps citizens recognize and prevent Medicare billing errors and possible fraud and abuse through the North Carolina Senior Medicare Patrol program.

Trained SHIIP counselors are available for free, unbiased counseling appointments in all 100 North Carolina counties. Learn more at www.ncshiip.com.