

Patient Information Medicare Annual Wellness Visit

What is the Medicare Annual Wellness Visit?

Medicare now provides, free of charge for all Medicare recipients, an annual wellness visit. The intent of this Annual Wellness Visit is not to provide you with a physical exam or 'checkup'. During this visit, your doctor will meet with you to help you create a healthcare prevention and screening plan, especially for you and based on your medical needs and history.

Does this replace the Welcome to Medicare Exam?

No, when you become eligible for Medicare, you may receive the Welcome to Medicare Exam within 12 months of your eligibility date. This is a head-to-toe physical exam. Twelve months later, and every year after, you are eligible for the Annual Wellness Visit. This is not a physical exam, but an opportunity to meet with your doctor to make sure that your healthcare screening and safety is addressed.

What should I expect during my visit?

During the visit, your doctor will record your medical history and check your blood pressure, vision, and weight and height to measure your body mass index. Body mass index (BMI) is a measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to both adult men and women. Your doctor will check to make sure you're up-to-date with preventive screenings and services, such as cancer screening and shots.

Your doctor may order further tests, depending on your general health and medical history. Your doctor also will give you advice to help you prevent disease, improve your health or stay well. You'll get a written plan (such as a checklist) when you leave letting you know which screenings and other preventive services you should get.

You also can talk with your provider about end-of-life planning, including advance directives. Advance directives are legal documents that allow you to put in writing what kind of health care you would want if you were too ill to speak for yourself. Talking to your family, friends, and health care providers about your wishes is important, but these legal documents make sure your wishes are followed.

What should I bring to my first Wellness visit?

Bring the following things if you're seeing a new doctor for the first time, or if there have been changes in your health since your last visit:

- Medical records, including immunization records (such as a flu shot you received at the pharmacy)
- Family health history - try to learn as much as you can about your family's health history before your appointment. Any information you can give your doctor can help determine if you are at risk for certain diseases.

- A list of prescription and over-the-counter drugs that you currently take, how often you take them, and why.

What if I have been on Medicare for years? Am I still eligible for the Annual Wellness Visit?

After you've had Part B for longer than 12 months, you can get a yearly wellness visit to develop or update a prevention plan just for you. You will pay nothing for this exam. This exam is covered once every 12 months. You don't need to get the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam before getting a yearly "Wellness" visit, but if you do choose to get the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam, you'll have to wait 12 months before you can get your first yearly "Wellness" visit.

What if I have other health problems or medication refills that I want to discuss?

The Annual Wellness Visit is not designed to be a visit to discuss your chronic conditions. You may be asked to return at a later date to address these concerns. If time allows, your provider may be able to briefly discuss some of your ongoing problems, but you may be charged for an additional office visit, which could be applied to your deductible or co-insurance.

Will Medicare still pay for my other preventive services?

Yes, other preventive services are still covered. Medicare has not made any other changes in preventive care or screening coverage that you were eligible for prior to this year. Part B covers many preventive services, including **bone mass measurements**, **mammograms**, and **flu shots**. There is no charge for the Annual Wellness Visit, but there may be deductible and co-insurance charges for some of the other preventive services.

I have other questions. Where can I get answers?

You can ask your provider any questions regarding your health and medical care by calling his or her office. You can also contact Medicare at 1-800- 623-4227 or visit www.medicare.gov if you have questions about this examination.

We are scheduling Annual Wellness Visits for our patients beginning in April. Please contact your primary care physician to schedule this visit or if you have questions about this visit.