

The Medicare Annual Wellness Visit

Patient and Family—Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Annual Wellness Visit (AWV)? The Medicare annual wellness visit is a strategy session designed to help you and your primary care provider develop an ongoing health plan intended to keep you healthy, safe, and independent. The purpose of your annual wellness visit is to:

- Review your medical history
- Identify any potential health risks
- Develop a personalized preventive services plan that will include appropriate health screenings

Discussions will focus on items such as cancer screenings, fall risk assessments, living wills and other current and future wellness topics. There are no co-pays or deductibles for this visit. If after your visit your health care provider and you determine additional care is needed, a separate visit or service may be scheduled and there may be a fee associated.

What is the “Welcome to Medicare” or Initial Preventive Physical Examination (IPPE)? The IPPE is your initial Annual Wellness Visit after first being on Medicare. You should schedule this visit within the first 12 months of enrolling in Medicare.

How is the IPPE different than the AWV? Medicare Part B coverage allows for an AWV 12 calendar months after your IPPE and every year thereafter. Being the first AWV, the IPPE includes initial conversations about health history as well as a vision assessment and recording of your height.

What should I expect at my AWV? At your AWV, you and your Healthcare Provider will update your medical records, determine health concerns based on your medical/family history, perform simple assessments and discuss future preventive and wellness activities. The AWV generally includes:

- Routine measurements such as height (at IPPE), weight, and blood pressure
- Vision exam (at IPPE)
- Review of medical and family history
- Establishing a comprehensive list of all of the physicians treating you along with reviewing your current medications
- Review all immunizations such as pneumonia and flu
- Personal risk assessments
- Review of functional ability and level of safety
- Creating a schedule for Medicare's screening and preventive services over the next 5 to 10 years

What does an AWV not include? An AWV is not a physical examination or a visit focused on current conditions and does not generally include medication refills, routine physical check-ups or services for new or existing health problems. These services will require an extended visit, which will be billed separately and have different coverage by Medicare.

When am I eligible for my AWV? You are eligible for your first AWV (IPPE) within the first 12 months after your initial enrollment effective date for Medicare part B. After your IPPE/ “Welcome to Medicare” visit, you must wait 12 months from that visit before you can have your next AWV. You should have an AWV 12 months after the initial AWV (IPPE) and every 12 months thereafter.

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How do I schedule my AWW? Schedule via the patient online portals: MyVirginiaMason for Virginia Mason primary care patients or MyChart for Franciscan Medical Group patients. You can also schedule with many providers by going to VMFH.org and locating the provider's profile. You can also call your primary care provider's office and follow the prompts for scheduling.

Can the Medicare AWW be done virtually? Yes, for most providers. Many patients prefer to be seen in-person for an AWW, but some prefer a virtual visit. If a virtual AWW is not an option when scheduling online, call to schedule and to discuss options. Because the AWW does not include a physical exam, it can be done virtually. As described, you may choose to have a physical exam at another visit but Medicare may not pay for this service. If you have a Medicare Advantage or other type of Medicare plan, you will need to contact your insurance to determine what is covered. An annual physical may include more specific physical examinations, including exams of the head and neck, heart and lungs, abdominal area, neurological functions, dermatological and extremities.

How often can I have my AWW? You can have an annual wellness visit once every 12 months. For example: If you have your AWW on May 15, you can schedule your next AWW the following year anytime in the month of May (May 1 or later). You become "due" or "overdue" after 12 months since your last visit. In this example, on June 1 and later. It is considered best practice to always have an AWW booked by scheduling the next AWW at your current AWW 12 months out.

What does the AWW cost? There are no out-of-pocket costs, such as co-pays and deductibles. However, you may be responsible for a deductible or co-pay expense if additional evaluation is required.

Will I actually see a provider during the AWW? You will generally see your Primary Care Provider, who could be a physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant. You may also schedule with another VMFH Primary Care Provider if needed due to availability. Depending on the clinic, you may also spend time with nursing staff or other medical professionals who will help with visit preparation or initial assessments, medical history review, vital signs completion, and other activities to help prepare for Preventive and wellness planning.

What should I bring to my IPPE or AWW appointment?

- Medical records, including your immunization records
- Family health history – Before your appointment, try to learn as much as you can about your family's health history. This will aid in determining potential health risks with your provider.
- A list of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications you currently take, how often and why you take these medications.

What if I do not have a Primary Care Provider? Visit VMFH.org or call 1-888-825-3227 to learn more about our providers and schedule an appointment to establish care.

Additional Resources

VMFH Medicare Annual Wellness Visit: [Wellness Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Medicare Wellness Visits: [Medicare Learning Network](#)

Medicare Annual Wellness Visit: [Patient FACTS](#)

Welcome to Medicare Preventive Visit: [Medicare.gov](#)