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# Medicare Annual Wellness Visits

Educational briefing for providers

## Medicare Annual Wellness Visit (AWV)

The AWV is a preventative wellness exam that is 100% covered by Medicare. It is not a physical exam. Instead, patients work with their physician to develop or update a preventative care plan based on their health and risk factors.

Medicare annual wellness visits (AWVs) can help physicians identify patient risk early to ensure accurate risk scoring, improve quality scores through preventative services, and engage patients in their care. AWVs can also generate significant revenue for the group: a practice with just 150 Medicare patients can earn \$17,500 annually through AWVs.



### Elements of an **initial** AWV

Acquire beneficiary information

- Administer health risk assessment
- Establish list of current providers, suppliers
- Establish beneficiary's medical/family history
- Review beneficiary's potential risk factors for depression
- Review beneficiary's functional ability, level of safety

### Two types of AWVs:

- **Initial AWV:** develop preventative care plan
- **Subsequent AWV:** update preventative care plan

Steps four and five not required for subsequent AWVs

Begin assessment

- Obtain height, weight, BMI (or waist circumference), blood pressure
- Detect any cognitive impairment

Only weight and blood pressure measurements required for subsequent AWVs

Counsel beneficiary

- Establish written screening schedule
- Establish list of risk factors, conditions for which interventions are recommended or underway
- Furnish personalized health advice, appropriate referrals
- Furnish at discretion of beneficiary, advance care planning services

Medicare waives cost sharing for advance care planning when it is administered and billed alongside AWV



For more details about the components of AWVs, check out [The ABCs of the Annual Wellness Visit \(AWV\)](#) by CMS.

Source: CMS, Quality Improvement Organizations & HealthInsight, "Annual Wellness Visit Implementation Guide," Porter S, "AWV Uncorks New Revenue Stream, Improves Health Care Quality," *AAFP News*, February 24, 2017; "FAQ on Medicare Annual Wellness Visit (AWV) and Initial Preventative Physical Examination," *AAFP Practice Management*, March 2018; Tse A, "Leverage Annual Wellness Visits to improve value-based performance," *Medical Economics*, June 25, 2018; Advisory Board research and analysis.

# Medicare Annual Wellness Visits

## Educational briefing for providers (continued)

### Billing for AWVs

	Initial Annual Wellness Visit	Subsequent Annual Wellness Visit
<b>Visit type</b>	Patient's first AWV	All AWVs after patient's first
<b>CPT<sup>1</sup> code</b>	G0438	G0439
<b>Frequency</b>	Once	Annually
<b>Eligibility</b>	Patient has had Medicare coverage for more than 12 months <sup>2</sup> <u>and</u> has not received IPPE <sup>3</sup> or AWV in past 12 months	

- ▶ **Diagnosis coding:** Physicians may choose to report any diagnosis code consistent with the patient's exam when submitting an AWV claim.
- ▶ **E/M<sup>4</sup> services:** Physicians can also bill for "medically necessary" E/M services that are delivered during the same visit as the AWV. To be paid for both services, the E/M code must be billed with the modifier -25, and physicians must provide separate documentation to support each service. Patients may have a co-pay or coinsurance for E/M services.

### Frequently asked questions

- Q:** What is the difference between an AWV and IPPE ("Welcome to Medicare") visit?
- A:** While both visits are preventative and 100% covered, patients are only eligible for the IPPE once during the first 12 months of their Medicare coverage. The AWV is then covered annually after this initial 12-month period.
- Q:** How can I find out if my patient has previously had an IPPE or AWV?
- A:** Contact your local [Medicare administrative contractor \(MAC\)](#). If the patient has moved recently, contact the MAC where they may have previously received an AWV.
- Q:** Does Medicare Advantage also cover AWVs?
- A:** Yes, CMS requires that Medicare Advantage plans cover the IPPE and AWV for beneficiaries.
- Q:** Who can perform AWVs?
- A:** Physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, certified clinical nurse specialists, and medical professionals.<sup>5</sup>

1) Current procedural terminology.  
 2) Medicare beneficiaries eligible for Initial Preventative Physical Exam (IPPE), also known as "Welcome to Medicare Visit" during first 12 months of coverage.  
 3) Initial Preventative Physical Exam, also known as "Welcome to Medicare Visit."  
 4) Evaluation and management.  
 5) Health educators, registered dietitians, nutrition professionals or other licensed practitioners.

Source: CMS, Quality Improvement Organizations & HealthInsight, "Annual Wellness Visit Implementation Guide," Porter S, "AWV Uncorks New Revenue Stream, Improves Health Care Quality," *AAFP News*, February 24, 2017; "FAQ on Medicare Annual Wellness Visit (AWV) and Initial Preventative Physical Examination," *AAFP Practice Management*; March 2018; Tse A, "Leverage Annual Wellness Visits to improve value-based performance," *Medical Economics*, June 25, 2018; Advisory Board research and analysis.