

Medicare Wellness Visits

As many people know, Medicare, for years, never paid for any “preventive medicine”. In recent years this has changed rather dramatically. A few years ago Medicare started paying for a “Welcome to Medicare” visit, but this was only for new enrollees into Medicare. Now, Medicare pays for an annual visit each and every year!

If you are new to Medicare (first 12 months) this is called a “Welcome to Medicare” visit. If you have been enrolled in Medicare longer than 12 months, the preventive visit is called the “Annual Wellness Visit”. **We strongly encourage you to take advantage of this new Medicare benefit—it will cost you absolutely nothing!** However, we want all of our patients to be aware that these annual visits are not “physicals” as many of us have come to use the term.

At your Medicare Wellness visit, we will primarily update your medical history, review your medicines, and review which other doctors, if any, you are seeing. We will review with you the various tests and immunizations that are recommended specifically for you. We will check your height, weight, and blood pressure, and give you a personalized plan for further screening tests. If indicated, we will refer you for further education, counseling or services to improve your health and well-being. In some cases (based on Medicare guidelines) we might also check cholesterol, blood sugar, and some other blood tests. **We will not refill medications or address any health problems at the annual wellness visit; these would have to be addressed at another visit.**

While these wellness visits may be different than you (or we!) have been accustomed to, they can potentially be very beneficial, and we strongly encourage you to schedule one. **As a matter of fact, these visits could be an excellent opportunity for someone who rarely sees a doctor (spouse, family member, friend, neighbor...) to painlessly have a health assessment at absolutely no cost whatsoever!** So please, help us spread the word—*and* schedule your Medicare Wellness Visit.

P.S. If you know someone who is not especially fond of the care they get from another office, perhaps you can suggest they see us for their Medicare Wellness Visit. There is absolutely no obligation to continue to see us—and it will not cost them a red cent!