

The Annual Wellness Visit

Helping your patients understand the benefits

Both the annual wellness visit (AWV) and the complete physical exam (CPE) are essential components of a patient's health care plan. Together they offer a complete picture of a patient's health to guide current treatment and prevention and assist with the planning of a long-term health care strategy:

- **Annual wellness visit:** a comprehensive review of a patient's overall health status and risk factors that can help providers detect and address health issues early on and empower patients to take charge of their health
- **Complete physical exam:** a hands-on evaluation or physical exam that addresses current health and immediate care needs

Prioritizing annual wellness visits

As the patient's first point of contact, it's essential for primary care providers to stress the importance of the AWV in addition to CPEs, and to help patients understand the different benefits and components of each.

	Annual wellness visit	Complete physical exam
Purpose	Preventive planning	Diagnosis and treatment of current issues
Coverage	• Covered annually by Medicare	• Not covered by Medicare • Patients pay 100% out-of-pocket unless covered by another insurance provider • Typically covered by Medicare Advantage plans
Focus	• Review of overall health • Risk assessment • Preventive planning	• Direct physical examination • Diagnostic procedures
Includes	• Check of basic vitals • Health risk assessments • Screening • Counseling	• Comprehensive vital signs check • Mental health evaluation • Physical evaluation • Measurements • Diagnostics • Medication review • Labs

Preparing for an annual wellness visit

Primary care providers can help prepare patients for their first annual wellness visit by explaining what constitutes an AWV and letting them know what kind of information they will be asked to share during their appointment.

Components of an annual wellness visit include:

Health Risk Assessment (HRA)	• Demographics • Self-assessed health status • Psychosocial and behavioral risks • ADLs and IADLs (daily living activities)
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Medical & Social History	• Past illnesses, surgeries, allergies • Medication and supplement use • Family medical history • Lifestyle habits (diet, exercise, substance use)
Screenings & Measurements	• Depression and mood disorders • Functional ability and fall risk • Cognitive impairment • Height, weight, BMI, blood pressure • Vision and gait (initial preventive physical exam only)
Planning & Counseling	• Advance care planning (ACP) • Opioid and substance use screening • Personalized health advice • Referrals to preventive services and community programs
Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)	• Optional assessment starting in 2024 • Focus on culturally and linguistically appropriate care

Billing and coding reminders

When submitting claims for AWWs and CPEs, please be sure to utilize the appropriate codes below.

Annual Wellness Visit Codes		Complete Physical Exam Codes	
Code	Visit Type	Code	Visit Type
G0402	Initial preventive physical exam (IPPE); 'Welcome to Medicare' visit	99386	Initial preventive medicine new pt age 40-64
G0438	Annual wellness visit; initial visit, includes full HRA and screenings	99387	Initial preventive medicine new pt age ≥ 65 yrs
G0439	Annual wellness visit; subsequent visit; annual follow-ups, assessments	99396	Periodic preventive med est pt 40-64 yrs
G0468	Federally Qualified Health Center Visit	99397	Periodic preventive med est pt age ≥ 65 yrs

- During an AWW, if a separate issue is addressed, providers may bill modifier 25, which may trigger a cost to the patient.
- Providers are encouraged to address all patients' needs during an AWW so they understand why they could receive a bill for a portion of the visit.

Calendar year reminder

Tufts Health Plan uses a calendar year (Jan. 1 through Dec. 31) for coverage of annual wellness visits for members of Tufts Health Plan Senior Care Options and Tufts Medicare Preferred plans. This means that a member can schedule a wellness visit fewer than 365 days after their previous visit as long as the visits are in different calendar years, as shown in the example below.

Date of wellness visit	Previous wellness visit	Coverage
April 1, 2026	Nov. 15, 2025	Covered visit
Dec. 31, 2026	Jan. 1, 2026	Not covered due to being in same calendar year