

Welcome to Medicare

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PHYSICAL EXAM



Q: What is the “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam? Why should I take it?

A: The “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam puts you in control of your health and your Medicare from the start. Offered during the first year that you are enrolled in Medicare, this comprehensive exam is an easy way for you and your doctor to get an accurate reference point for your health now and for the future. As of January 1, 2011, it’s free for most people with Medicare.

Q: What’s covered during the exam?

A: During the exam, you and your doctor will review your medical and family history, assess current health conditions and prescriptions, and conduct tests and screenings that allow the two of you to establish a baseline for future, personalized care. It’s also an opportunity for you and your doctor to discuss short- and long-term steps to prevent disease, improve your health and stay well. Following the exam, your doctor will provide you with a plan or checklist outlining the screenings and preventive services you should get.

In addition, encourage your doctor to discuss with you the preventive benefits and other services available to you through Medicare. It is also a time to make sure your health care wishes are carried out in the future.

Q: How much does the exam cost?

A: The “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam is free for most people with Medicare.

Q: I have a Medicare Advantage Plan. Can I still get the “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam?

A: Yes. The “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam is available to people who are in Medicare Advantage Plans. Check with your plan to find out if the exam will be free for you.

Q: How can I get the “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam?

A: It’s easy to take advantage of the “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam. If you currently have a doctor, just ask him/her about it, and schedule an appointment.

Q: If my doctor already knows my health history, what’s the benefit of this exam?

A: Enrollment in Medicare is an important step in your health care. At the start of this new stage, the “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam is an opportunity for a complete assessment of your health and provides a baseline for future, personalized care with your doctor.

The “Welcome to Medicare” physical exam is more comprehensive than a typical annual exam and allows for you and your doctor to discuss short- and long-term steps to prevent disease, improve your health and stay well. It is also the time to make sure that your health care wishes are carried out in the future.

Q&A

Q: What if I don't have a doctor?

A: If you do not have a doctor, visit medicare.gov or call 1-800-MEDICARE (TTY: 1-877-486-2048) for a list of providers in your area that take Medicare. Then, make an appointment with the doctor of your choice.

Q: How long do I have to take the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam after I enroll in Medicare?

A: The "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam is offered during the first 12 months that you are enrolled in Medicare. Once you enroll, it's important to schedule your "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam right away.

Q: What if I have been enrolled in Medicare longer than 12 months. Can I still receive the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam?

A: No. After the 12-month period has passed, you will need to schedule your visit as an annual "Wellness" exam as opposed to the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam.

Q: What is the annual "Wellness" exam?

A: This exam is a yearly wellness visit to develop or update a prevention plan just for you, based on your current health and risk factors. You'll pay nothing for this exam if the doctor participates in the Medicare program. This exam is covered once every 12 months.

Q: Should I do anything to prepare for the exam? Do I need to bring anything with me?

A: To make the most of your exam, you should bring the following things with you when you go to your "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam:

- Medical records, including immunization records (if you are seeing a new doctor for the first time)
- Family health history – in advance of your appointment, 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 drugs and over-the-counter medications that you currently take, how often you take them and why

Q: My doctor has not mentioned the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam or annual "Wellness" exam to me. Should I ask him/her?

A: If you have enrolled in Medicare within the last 12 months, you should ask your doctor about the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam. The exam provides a comprehensive set of benchmarks that helps you take charge of your health and your Medicare from the start. Like the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam, the annual "Wellness" exam will also include a thorough review of your health, as well as education and counseling about the preventive services you need, such as certain screenings and shots, and referrals for other care.

Q: Where can I get more information about the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam?

A: For further information about the "Welcome to Medicare" physical exam visit www.Medicare.gov/welcome or call 1-800-MEDICARE (TTY: 1-877-486-2048).

