

Capital Medical Clinic
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Dear Patients and Friends,

Recently, the details of the new yearly physical examination for Medicare beneficiaries were unveiled by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). However, this new benefit is not exactly what most of us would consider an annual physical exam. It is, rather, more of an “evaluation.” Medicare acknowledges as much, in that they have renamed the benefit the “annual wellness visit.”

The purpose of this letter is to explain this benefit to you so you will understand how these government-mandated changes will affect your annual visit. The new “annual wellness visit” is intended to assess:

- The patient’s risks for falls or injury;
- Generate a list of the patient’s current health care providers; and
- Determine and recommend the preventive health services that are due.
- The patient’s risk for depression;
- The patient’s cognitive ability;

There is virtually no physical examination required, and the encounter focuses on interviewing and updating portions of your medical history. It is important that we implement this new visit. When properly and thoughtfully undertaken, this benefit should help identify patients at risk for serious health issues. Medicare also has begun keeping a scorecard to see how well physicians are providing certain services, which likely will soon include this new benefit. Doctors who don’t provide this new service could be ranked as “underperforming” by Medicare. This may lead to financial and administrative penalties. To comply with the new requirements, our office must make changes in how we handle your annual visit.

For most of you with stable chronic health conditions, it is only necessary to be seen two or three times a year. To perform this new benefit as a separate service, an additional trip to the office each year would be required, and many patients would find this inconvenient.

This new visit format will mean that we will spend more time with you completing the required screening questionnaires. Accordingly, the doctor’s time with you will be focused on an examination pertinent to your continuing health issues, explaining the results of the screening tests, and going over the status of your preventive care screenings.

When you come in for your annual wellness visit, we will go over a series of questions with you. These are not random questions, but are widely accepted screening instruments for identifying depression and dementia risks, and safety hazards. You may find this process silly or perhaps even insulting, but please be patient and understanding as we try our best to implement these mandates in the required manner.

You can review the wellness visit requirements at this web address:
<http://www.medicare.gov/coverage/preventive-visit-and-yearly-wellness-exams.html>

Change is often difficult, but we are hopeful we can implement this new requirement in a way that is not disruptive to our primary goal of working to ensure your health and well being. We thank you in advance for your patience and understanding.

Yours truly,
Capital Medical Clinic