

# AWV Best Practice Tips

**Annual Wellness Visits (AWVs)** are one of the factors to finding success in **value-based care**. AWVs provide the perfect opportunity to perform a **comprehensive evaluation** of the patient, ensure preventive **quality gaps** are addressed and closed, and assess the status of all the patient's **chronic conditions** so that they can be fully captured at least once annually. Through the patient questionnaire and **health risk assessment**, there is also the opportunity to have a discussion with the patient about their current plan of care, if they are compliant and in agreement with goals, identify any functional, social, or cognitive changes that may be impacting their health goals, and potentially start having **advance care planning** discussions. Studies have also shown an overall reduction in healthcare expenditures for patients who've had their AWV, and those patients are more likely to have received all the recommended preventive screenings.

The AWV can be a standalone visit or added onto a routine follow-up if needed, as long as the documentation clearly supports the necessity for the office visit (refer to this [tip sheet](#) on billing guidelines). AWVs are covered **annually, free of cost** for the patient. Certain preventive screenings, as well as the advance care planning codes, are also covered as part of this preventive service offered Medicare and Medicare Advantage beneficiaries.

## Best Practice Tips for Annual Wellness Visit Completion

- Leverage data and reporting so you know who is due, or overdue, for their AWV
  - SOHO HEALTH provides an AWV Registry, but reports may also be available from your EMR
  - Assign the worklist to front desk or central scheduling staff as part of their standard work
  - Prioritize patients for their AWV, either by medical complexity or patients who haven't been in for an appointment in over a year. For patients who are routinely seen 3-4 times a year, add an AWV onto one of the standing visits.
- Educate and motivate staff to be "AWV Champions"
  - Understanding **why** the AWV is needed is just as important as actually scheduling them. This helps to foster a team approach around a shared goal – better outcomes and an improved quality of care for your patients
- Use the Health Risk Assessment patient questionnaire to capture all required elements of the AWV
  - We recommend using this [version](#) because it covers the essential preventive care screening questions and aligns with the Epic AWV Flowsheet for easy data entry into the EMR
  - Give the AWV questionnaire to patients in advance of the visit, either by mail or having patients come early and complete it in the lobby as they wait. This will save time during the appointment and allow the provider to focus in on the abnormal or positive screenings to drive the discussion
- Implement a routine checkout process to include a look-up of whether an AWV has been completed, or is booked upcoming, and if not, schedule it right then before the patient leaves. If patient is being seen for their AWV, schedule next year's visit at checkout so it won't show up on a worklist in the future
  - In addition to scheduling the AWV, create a thorough checkout process that includes a review of the patient instructions/directions. If there is a referral, ask the patient if they've been there before or if they need assistance in scheduling it. Review lab orders and remind patient if fasting is needed so they can plan appropriately. Reviewing the instructions during checkout helps ensure patients' understanding, helps to resolve any issues they may have with scheduling, reinforces the care plan, and encourages patient follow through.

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