

Top Story

Annual Wellness Visits: Unique Patient-First Appointments

An Annual Wellness Visit (AWV) is a free yearly appointment for Medicare patients designed such that a provider can pause and do a comprehensive review of the health of the patient in front of them. In this visit, providers will:

- Discuss a patient's chronic health conditions.
- Review their medication list in detail.
- Go over any screenings they are due for.
- And more...

A thorough AWV helps provide quality care to our Medicare patients while accurately setting the financial benchmarks in our value-based agreements—a mutually beneficial value and why we strive to improve the number of patients who complete an AWV each year.

The MaineHealth Epic team has done a fantastic job of integrating tools into the system to make AWVs easier for the patient and provider. Before an appointment, MaineHealth patients can take their Health Risk Assessment (HRA) through MyChart. Once in an exam room, the “Smart Set” feature in Epic pulls those MyChart responses directly into the AWV note, making access to an individual's HRA and medical records seamless.

In addition, the Epic team has built into the AWV visit multiple other tools important for patient care. The Healthy Aging Team has partnered with the Epic team to build the [4Ms Framework right into an AWV](#). With this framework, a provider can walk a patient through the following: *What Matters*, *Medication*, *Mentation*, and *Mobility*. Other tools built into the AWV include Advanced Health Care Directives, screening for substance abuse, and more.

Hand in hand with how health care has made digital advancements, AWVs can be fulfilled through a telehealth appointment. If a provider determines and documents that the patient doesn't need a blood pressure at the visit, an AWV can be done via a telehealth visit. Telehealth AWV visits have been slow to be adopted, but the opportunity for significant growth in telehealth AWVs is there.

A Medicare AWV is different than any other appointment and allows providers to deliver comprehensive high-quality care. And as their one free visit of the year, AWVs are extremely valuable for patients. With the combination of a comprehensive review of a patient's health conditions and quality gaps, tools built into Epic that guide high-value care, and systems in place to support this work, the AWV provides a critical opportunity for us to deliver patient care that is high value to all.