

Medicare Health Risk Assessment and Annual Wellness Visit

New to the Annual Wellness Visit

Beginning Jan. 1, 2012, a health risk assessment (HRA) must be included in the annual wellness visit for Medicare beneficiaries. The health risk assessment helps health care providers and their patients to focus in on good ways to improve health status and identify needed care. The HRA includes questions about chronic diseases, injury risks, modifiable risk factors, and urgent health needs.

What's an HRA?

You may have completed an HRA in the course of your periodic check-ups. An HRA generally asks about overall health and functional matters such as ability to engage in activities of daily living (ADLs), level of physical activity, history with regards to falling, any experience with pain, eating patterns, fatigue, alcohol or tobacco use, and medication use.

The HRA can be mailed to patients before their visit, completed in the office prior to seeing the health care professional, or completed during the actual visit. Additionally, the HRA can be completed through interactive telephonic or web-based programs or through community-based prevention programs. Sometimes a health care professional asks the questions and records the patient's responses during the course of the visit.

The assessment can help guide health care providers to better understand care that patients may need, including preventive services and tests. The HRA can be completed by a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, or clinical nurse specialist.

Medicare has not developed a model HRA, but there are model health risk assessment forms available, or health care providers can choose to use one of their own.

Model HRAs

View a model HRA from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/policy/ophth/hra/FrameworkForHRA.pdf>.

View a model HRA from the American Academy of Family Physicians at http://www.aafp.org/online/etc/medialib/aafp_org/documents/news_pubs/fpm/healthriskappraisal.Par.0001.File.dat/fpm20120300p11-rt1.pdf.