

McDuffie Medical Associates, PC

SUBJECT: New Medicare Annual Wellness Visits

As you may be aware, beginning January 1, 2011, Medicare will now provide coverage for an “Annual Wellness Visit” in addition to the one-time “Welcome to Medicare” exam. We commend Medicare on its efforts to implement this important new prevention benefit and know that this will be valuable to our patients.

As your health care provider, we wanted you to be aware of the specific Medicare guidelines for this new visit, because it is not what most people commonly refer to as a yearly **“physical exam.”**

The Annual Wellness visit must include, among other things

- Updating your medical history, including a list of all your health care providers
- Assessing health risk factors and the presence of any medical conditions
- Blood pressure, height and weight measurements
- Screening for conditions related to memory, depression, and functional status
- Immunizations and preventive screening
- End of life decisions

At this visit, your provider will work with you to create a personalized plan to help keep you healthy over the next few years. Subsequent annual wellness visits will update the information gathered in the first visit, and your physician will continue to assess your need for future screenings, interventions, and education. In addition, your provider will give you information about what Medicare covers for screening and health promotion.

This is not a “hands on” exam, but rather **“a review of your health, plus education and counseling about preventive services”** (taken directly from the 2011 Medicare & You Handbook).

Because this new “Annual Wellness Visit” is designed to focus on health promotion, and prevention planning, **Medicare** states if you are here to follow up on your chronic illnesses or have any new issues, there will be an additional office visit charge to address these medical problems

As always, we appreciate the trust you put in us to take care of your health care needs and hope that you will take advantage of this new benefit to work with your physician in creating your personalized prevention plan.

If you would like to discuss this new benefit, please call our office at 706-595-1461 to make an appointment.