

Preventative Exam vs. Office Visit

At first a preventive visit and office visit may seem similar, but there is a difference.

Preventative visits which are annual physicals, wellness exams or well child exams help prevent or detect any health concerns. Confusion comes when at your annual checkup you want to discuss or receive treatment for a new or existing condition that requires action. This is where a preventive visit can become an office visit and your bill can be impacted.

An office visit, or problem-related service, is to discuss or get treated for a specific health concern or condition. In your preventive visit if a new problem or condition is addressed and needs to be treated, your provider's office is required to bill as a separate office visit, due to action for treatment needed. You may have to pay for the visit as part of your deductible, copay and/or coinsurance.

What is a preventive visit?

- Review of medical history, general health and well-being
- Check your weight, height, temperature, blood pressure and pulse
- Listen to your heart and lungs
- Check your ears, eyes, throat, skin and abdomen
- Various immunizations
- Various cancer screenings, such as for breast, colorectal, cervical and prostate cancer
- Certain blood tests to check such things as cholesterol or blood sugar, or sexually transmitted infection
- Screenings and evaluation of future risks

Proper preventative care is important to help you live a longer, healthier life. A preventative checkup can help prevent disease before it starts and detect problems early, before they cause serious illness.

What is an office visit?

- Diagnosing and monitoring specific medical conditions
- Addressing medical concerns and treatment plans
- Medication refills
- Specialist referrals
- Abnormal Testing/lab results
- Addressing new or worsening symptoms

If a wellness exam is spent on specific or new health issues and treated it will no longer be considered solely a preventive visit, and an office visit should be billed in addition to the preventative service.