Boost Cognitive Health Screenings During Medicare Annual Wellness Visits

Perform assessments, document effectively and bill with correct CPT codes

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires cognitive impairment screening as part of the Medicare Annual Wellness Visit. Offering a Cognitive Health Assessment is especially important for patients reporting memory issues or other cognitive changes.

What is Cognitive Health Assessment

A Cognitive Health Assessment is a brief (5–10 minute) evaluation of key brain functions, including:

- Memory.
- Attention.
- Language.
- Thinking and reasoning skills.

These screenings can help detect treatable conditions and early signs of dementia. If concerns are identified, refer the patient for a more comprehensive evaluation by a specialist such as a neurologist, neuropsychologist, or geriatrician.

Who can offer it

Any clinician eligible to report Evaluation and Management (E/M) services may conduct the assessment, including – physicians (MD and DO), nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, and physician assistants.

What are the common non-diagnostic assessment methods

Interviews: During an Annual Wellness Visit –

- Ask the patient about memory, daily functioning and cognitive abilities.
- When possible, include input from family members or caregivers.

Screening tools : A positive result indicates the need for further evaluation. Common tools include:

Screener names	Description
Mini-Cog	Combines a three-item recall test with a clock drawing task.
MoCA (Montreal Cognitive Assessment)	A more comprehensive screening tool.
MMSE (Mini-Mental State Exam)	A 30-question test assessing orientation, memory, attention, language and visual-spatial skills.
SAGE (Self-Administered Gerocognitive Exam)	Can be completed at home and returned to the provider.
Clock Drawing Test (CDT)	A quick standalone screening tool.

What are the documentation requirements

Document the following in the patient's medical record:

- Interview findings:
  - Patient history.
  - Evaluation of daily living activities.
  - Member's social support system.
  - Observations of behavioral or mood symptoms.
  - Home safety evaluation.
  - Review current medication list.
  - Care plan.
  - Avanced care planning.
- Results of the screening tool.

Provide a summary letter or check-box form to the patient and their family.

Whare are the claims codes

Use the following codes when submitting claims for Cognitive Health Assessments:

Codes	Description
96116	Neurobehavioral status examination.
96136	Psychological or neuropsychological test administration and scoring by a physician or psychologist, first 30 minutes.
96138	Psychological or neuropsychological test administration and scoring by technician, first 30 minutes.
96146	Single psychological or neuropsychological automated test.

Helpful Resources

- Dementia Care Aware program – no-cost training and resources for providers on how to perform and bill for these Cognitive Health Assessment services in California.
- Medicare Cognitive Assessment & Care Plan Services – provides information about Cognitive Health Assessments, things to know and related resources.
- Alzheimer's and Related Dementias Resources for Professionals – access no-cost clinical practice tools, training materials and more. Resources are available for physicians, nurses and other professionals.