

What Defines a Wellness Exam

A **wellness exam** (also called a **preventive visit**, **annual physical**, or **routine check-up**) is a standard set by the AMA (American Medical Association). A wellness exam is a visit focused on **prevention**, not treating active problems. The exact components vary by age, sex, and medical history, but generally include:

1. Medical History Review

- Refills on Current medications NOT new medication
- Allergies
- Past medical/surgical history
- Family history of diseases
- Social history (tobacco/alcohol use, activity level, diet, stress)

2. Vital Signs

- Blood pressure
- Heart rate
- Sometimes Temperature
- Weight and BMI
- oxygen saturation

3. General Physical Examination

Depending on age/sex, may include:

- Heart and lung exam
- Head/neck exam
- Thyroid check
- Abdominal exam
- Neurologic screening
- Musculoskeletal overview
- Vision/hearing screening (sometimes)
- Breast/Pelvic exam (women, when indicated)
- Testicular/prostate review (men, when indicated)

4. Preventive Screenings/labs

Ordered based on age and risk factors:

- Cholesterol
- Diabetes screening
- Kidney function
- Electrolytes

- Liver function
- Bone marrow function
- Thyroid
- Pap smear
- Mammogram
- Colon cancer screening

5. Counseling & Health Maintenance

- Diet and exercise guidance
- Managing risks (blood pressure, weight, smoking)
- Medication review

A wellness exam does *not* include:

- Discussing new problems
- Managing chronic conditions- refills yes, change in medication no
- Prescription change:
Those fall under a *problem-oriented* E/M visit, not the preventive code.
- Headaches
- Discussing Skin conditions
- Joint/muscle/nerve pains

Anything that falls outside the national guidelines for **preventive care** will result in a **separate or additional charge** on your bill. These rules are set at the **national level**, not by our office. Federal regulations prohibit both over-charging and under-charging, and although we may not always agree with every requirement, our medical licenses depend on following these standards. There is no way to bypass them, as we must often submit our visit documentation to your insurance company for reimbursement.

Please Note

You may sometimes feel that your visit was not long enough to justify the charge. However, medical billing is partially based on **total provider time**, not just face-to-face time. This includes the time your provider spends **before** your appointment reviewing your chart—such as past medical history, other providers' notes, lab or imaging results, ER reports, and specialist consultations. It also includes the time **during** your visit, and the time **after** your appointment coordinating your care, communicating with specialists, reviewing studies, and advocating for you.

At Golden Heart Medical LLC, we are thorough, and we do not cut corners with your health care in order to reduce charges. Our goal is to provide safe, complete, and responsible medical care.