

Annual Physicals: Why They Matter & What to Expect

Do your employees like going to the doctor? The answer is probably “no”, but that’s no excuse for them to avoid their annual physicals...especially considering that most health plans offer them at no cost to them.



Are Physicals Really Necessary?

Completing an annual physical is a critical piece of the puzzle in early detection of many common diseases and medical conditions. Catching a problem in its early stages is less expensive and less harmful to the body. That's why health plans often offer them free of charge.

Completing them annually, rather than a one-time occurrence, is also important because it helps your doctor watch for trends in your employee's health that may not get noticed in a single visit or infrequent visits. Like everything, an individual's health is always changing, so it only makes sense that your employees should maintain a routine physical schedule to keep their health in check.

Preparing for their Appointment

Once you've convinced your employee to schedule their annual physical, they may be wondering what to do next and/or what to expect at the appointment itself. Well, the first thing that they should do is relax. Annual physicals are usually quick and painless, so they shouldn't need to stress about it. To prepare for their appointment, all they need to do is gather up some information to have ready for their doctor. This can include:

- Their health insurance card
- Their driver's license or some other form of ID
- Their social security number (if they don't have it memorized)
- Any health changes or procedures that may have occurred since they last saw their doctor
- Their family health history
- A list of the medicines and vitamins that they are currently taking
- The contact information for any other doctors that they may have seen
- A list of any questions that they might have

By bringing this information to their annual physical, your employees will have a jumpstart on the information that they will need to fill out any provided forms. Depending upon your employee's doctor, they may even receive these forms in the mail ahead of their appointment to speed up the process. If so, they can simply fill them out and bring them for their doctor to review.

On Appointment Day

Once your employee's appointment day has arrived, they will meet with the doctor to discuss their overall health and to check some basic vitals to ensure that there are no red flags. This general health exam will include the measuring of their heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing, among other basic physical exam procedures. The doctor will also discuss with them any concerns that he might have based upon their family history or the information that they provided on their completed forms.

After this, your employee's doctor will continue on to recommend any preventive screenings or follow-up appointments that he might want them to consider. He will also let them know if they are up-to-date on their immunizations or if there might be an optional immunization that would be beneficial for them. Depending upon their exam, he may also want to do further tests, such as a urinalysis or bloodwork. If this is recommended, it is probably for a reason and your employee should strongly consider it. It's important to remind your employee, though, that these "extra tests" are outside of the scope of their free physical, so they will be billed through their health insurance.

As your employee leaves their appointment, they should feel confident in their current health status, and they should have a complete understanding of any changes that they might need to make in the coming year. After this check-up, your employee should have a plan for any additional screenings or immunizations that they are going to pursue, and they should make sure that they understand why they are recommended so that they can make an informed decision on their next steps.

So, what are you waiting for?

Annual physicals can detect a wide variety of health problems before they become serious. It most certainly will save your employees' money and it might even save their life! If your employees haven't completed a physical this year, encourage them to give their doctor a call today. End of the year appointments are filling up fast and your employee's health shouldn't have to wait, so don't delay!