
HEALTH OUTCOME SURVEY (HOS)

Talking points for Medicare patients

WHY IS HIGHMARK PROVIDING THIS?

Each spring, patients with a Medicare Advantage health plan are surveyed at random by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This **Health Outcomes Survey (HOS)** is designed to track if patients are maintaining or improving their physical and mental health. Something we know is equally important to you.

The talking points align to this survey, and we've included actual HOS questions so you know exactly what is being asked.

Addressing these areas will help patients live happier, healthier lives. Take a look.

Based on the HOS survey, there are five main areas that are strong indicators of a Medicare patient's overall health –



1

**PHYSICAL
HEALTH**



2

**MENTAL
HEALTH**



3

**FALL
RISK**



4

**BLADDER
CONTROL**



5

**PHYSICAL
ACTIVITY**

We've outlined talking points that directly address these areas in order to reach our goals: helping shape patients' perceptions of their health, helping patients set realistic expectations when managing chronic conditions or unexpected injuries or illnesses, increasing the frequency of measure-related discussions, and helping members remember measure-related discussions.

1

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Improving and maintaining physical health

HOS QUESTIONS

- Does your health now limit you in these activities? If so, how much?
 - Moderate activities, such as moving a table, pushing a vacuum cleaner, bowling, playing golf, or climbing several flights of stairs
- During the past 4 weeks, have you had any of the following problems with your work or other regular daily activities as a result of your physical health?
 - Accomplished less than you would like as a result of your physical health?
 - Were limited in the kind of work or other activities as a result of your physical health?
- During the past 4 weeks, how much did pain interfere with your normal work (including both work outside the home and housework)?
- In general, how would you say your health is:
- How much of the time during the past 4 weeks did you have a lot of energy?
- During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time has your physical health or emotional problems interfered with your social activities (like visiting with friends, relatives, etc.)?

TALKING POINTS

- Encourage patients to take control of their health by staying active and remind them that aging doesn't have to mean sacrificing quality of life.
- Give them a rundown of all that physical activity can help with, including:
 - Increasing energy levels
 - Managing weight and controlling bad cholesterol
 - Improving physical strength
 - Building and maintaining healthy bones, muscles, and joints
 - Improving balance and reducing fall risk
 - Managing and preventing diseases like diabetes or osteoporosis
 - Improving overall mood and wellbeing
- Remind them that physical activity doesn't have to be something extreme, it could be as simple as walking the stairs.
- Praise patients that are already exercising and talk about types of exercise that are good for them.
- Encourage patients to discuss with their doctor how much exercise is right for them.
- Discuss the benefits of SilverSneakers®.



MENTAL HEALTH

Improving and maintaining mental health

HOS QUESTIONS

- In general, how would you say your health is:
- How much of the time during the past 4 weeks did you have a lot of energy?
- During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time has your physical health or emotional problems interfered with your social activities (like visiting with friends, relatives, etc.)?
- During the past 4 weeks, have you had any of the following problems with your work or other regular daily activities as a result of any emotional problems (such as feeling depressed or anxious)?
 - Accomplished less than you would like as a result of any emotional problems
 - Didn't do work or other activities as carefully as usual as a result of any emotional problems
- How much of the time during the past 4 weeks: Have you felt calm and peaceful? Have you felt downhearted and blue?

TALKING POINTS

- Ask patients if they have experienced any significant changes in mood or behavior, which could include:
 - Personality changes
 - Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
 - Restlessness or excessive crying
 - Overwhelming feelings of hopelessness
 - Trouble sleeping
 - Overall fatigue or loss of appetite
- Make the patient aware of their treatment options and where they can get help.
- Let them know that they are not alone, and that nearly one in every five American adults suffers from a diagnosable mental health condition.
- Give them a few basic ways to improve their wellbeing, including getting health checkups, being socially active, and finding time to relax. Encourage them to be physically active to help their mood.
- Educate the patient about common mental health symptoms and how to recognize them in their loved ones.

3

FALL RISK

Reducing the risk of falling

HOS QUESTIONS

- In the past 12 months, did you talk with your doctor or other health provider about falling or problems with balance or walking?
- Did you fall in the past 12 months?
- In the past 12 months, have you had a problem with balance or walking?
- Has your doctor or other health provider done anything to help prevent falls or treat problems with balance or walking? Some things they might do include:
 - Suggest that you use a cane or walker
 - Suggest that you do an exercise or physical therapy program
 - Suggest a vision or hearing test

TALKING POINTS

- Remind patients that falls don't happen because of age. Falling is usually a symptom of something else, which could include:
 - Medication side effects
 - Weakness or pain in the legs or back that cause a balance issue
 - Foot pain or numbness
 - Issues with vision
 - Ear disorders
 - Household hazards, like poor lighting or loose rugs
- When appropriate, recommend patients take these steps:
 - Exercise and stay physically active
 - Consider a cane or walker
 - Schedule a House Call
 - Schedule an eye or hearing exam
 - Take a closer look at medication side effects that may cause dizziness
 - Wear non-slip footwear
 - Get a physical therapy evaluation
- Make it clear that falls can have serious consequences – they are the single most cause of death and injury and the leading cause of hospital admissions for older Americans.



BLADDER CONTROL

Bladder control

HOS QUESTIONS

- Many people experience problems with urinary incontinence, the leakage of urine. In the past 6 months, have you accidentally leaked urine?
- During the past 6 months, how much did leaking of urine make you change your daily activities or interfere with your sleep?
- Have you ever talked with a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider about leaking of urine?
- There are many ways to treat urinary incontinence including bladder training, exercises, medication, and surgery. Have you ever talked with a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider about any of these approaches?

TALKING POINTS

- Encourage patients to talk about any bladder control issues. Acknowledge that while it may be uncomfortable to talk about it, urinary incontinence may be a sign of a more serious condition or could lead to other health issues if it's not addressed.
- Make patients aware that urinary incontinence is not a disease – it's a symptom.
- Mention that there are treatments available – bladder training, exercises, and medication – and that these options may be covered by their health plan.
- Let patients know that bladder issues aren't inevitable because of aging and that they shouldn't be embarrassed. Over 25% of Americans experience incontinence issues at some point in their lives.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Monitoring physical activity

HOS QUESTIONS

- In the past 12 months, did you talk with a doctor or other health provider about your level of exercise or physical activity? For example, a doctor or other health provider may ask if you exercise regularly or take part in physical exercise.
- In the past 12 months, did a doctor or other health provider advise you to start, increase or maintain your level of exercise or physical activity? For example, in order to improve your health, your doctor or other health provider may advise you to start taking the stairs, increase walking from 10 to 20 minutes every day or to maintain your current exercise program.

TALKING POINTS

- Encourage patients to take control of their health by staying active and remind them that aging doesn't have to mean sacrificing quality of life.
- Give them a rundown of all that physical activity can help with, including:
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 - Managing weight and controlling bad cholesterol
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