

# Improving Health Outcomes: Best Practices



Office staff can affect health outcomes and overall satisfaction with their patients by focusing on improving communication, building trust and meeting the patients' physical and emotional needs. This leads to better health outcomes and more positive patient satisfaction scores.

Patient health outcomes are measured by the **Health Outcome Survey (HOS)**, which is a random sample survey sent out each spring for Medicare Advantage Organization (MAO) members. Four key health outcomes measured in the HOS are Falls, Bladder Control, Physical Health, and Mental Health.

## Falls

### HOS Questions

- A fall is when your body goes to the ground without being pushed. In the past 12 months, did you talk with your doctor or other health provider about falling or problems with balance or walking?
- 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?

### Best Practices

- Identify if the patient has had recent falls or near falls
- Educate patient regarding Durable Medical Equipment: canes, walkers, wheelchairs
- Review Medications and consider withdrawing those that may increase risk of falling
- Assess the patient's changes in hearing or vision
- Suggest a thorough home safety inspection
- Encourage beginning or continuing some type of physical activity

## Bladder Control

### HOS Questions

- Many people experience leakage of urine, also called urinary incontinence. In the past six months, have you experienced leaking of urine?
- During the past six months, how much did leaking 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 control or manage the leaking of urine, 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?

### Best Practices

- Identify the patient's perception of the problem, e.g., quality of life and barriers or social determinants of health.
- To discuss UI, start the conversation using other topics, e.g. sleep issues, medications, etc. so that the subject of UI is introduced as a simple and non-threatening concern.
- Educate and encourage the availability of treatment options (products, medication, treatment) which are ways to control or manage UI.

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## Monitoring Physical Health

### 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.

### Best Practices

- Assess current level of physical health and activity
- Assess gait (walking ability)
- Provide resources / educational materials related to physical activity: exercise videos, senior centers programs, community outreach for seniors, etc.
- Maintain or increase physical activity by encouraging exercises for seniors:
  - Walking
  - Gardening
  - Chair exercises
  - Senior exercise classes
  - Falls prevention classes
  - Tai Chi

## Improving and Maintaining Physical Health

### HOS Questions

- In general, would you say your health is: Excellent? Very good? Good? Fair? Poor?
- Does your health now limit you in activities you might do during a typical day, such as moving a table, pushing a vacuum cleaner, playing golf or climbing a flight of stairs? If so, how much?
- Does your health now limit you in activities you might do during a typical day, such as moving a table, pushing a vacuum cleaner, playing golf or climbing a flight of stairs? If so, how much?
- During the past four weeks, how much did pain interfere with your normal work (outside the home and housework)?

### Best Practices

- Assess the patient's overall health
- Assess level of pain and how the pain affects their daily activities
- Refer patients to physical therapy if assistance is needed.
- Provide Resources / Educational materials related to physical activity and fitness programs, e.g., exercise programs at senior or community centers, mall walking groups, etc.

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## Mental Health

### HOS Questions

- 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)?
  - a. Accomplished less than you would like as a result of any emotional problems
  - b. Didn't do work or other activities as carefully as usual as a result of any emotional problems
- How much time during the past 4 weeks have you: felt calm and peaceful? Did you have a lot of energy? Have you felt downhearted and blue?
- 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.)?

### Best Practices

- Assess how the patient's emotions affect their daily activities and social interactions.
- Provide counseling referrals to the patient.
- Reconcile medications (e.g., antidepressants) at each visit and address issues of substance abuse and illegal drug use.
- Encourage the patient to manage their lifestyle by staying connected to family and friends, find a support group; engage in community activities; exercise and eat a healthy diet; get plenty of sleep (7-9 hours a night).
- Suggest alternative therapies: Acupuncture, Meditation, Massage therapy, or Yoga