

CAHPS and HOS: Reference guide for physicians, with best practices

The **Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®)** program and the **Health Outcomes Survey (HOS)** are tools for assessing patients' experiences with their health plan, personal doctor, specialists and healthcare in general. These surveys have become the national standard for measuring and reporting on the experiences of consumers with their health plans. CAHPS and HOS are mandated regulatory/accreditation surveys sent to a randomly selected number of Medicare members.

The suggestions below are provided to help you enhance your patients' health care experience.



CAHPS member survey questions

Industry best-practices for physicians

Getting appointments and care quickly

When care was needed right away, how often did you get care as soon as you needed it?

How often did you see the person you came to see within 15 minutes of your appointment time?

How often did you get an appointment for your health care at a doctor's office or clinic as soon as you thought you needed?

Patients who are aware of potential scheduling timelines can plan for time needed and adjust accordingly.

Notify patients by text, phone or in the waiting room if there are wait time delays. This helps manage patient expectations.

Advocate for your patient and ask if they have transportation available for their appointment. Resources For Living (RFL), offered by Aetna can put your patients in touch with transportation resources.

Getting needed care

How often did you get an appointment to see a specialist as soon as you needed?

How often was it easy to get the care, tests, or treatment needed?

Patients who understand why types of care, tests or treatments are essential are more likely to adhere to a care plan and seek the care that is recommended and needed.

Encourage practice staff to provide patients with support in identifying in-network specialist care and services (e.g. labs, imaging, radiology).


How well doctors communicate

Were things explained to you in a way you could understand?


How often did your personal doctor spend enough time with you?

Effective communication with patients is key to improving patient engagement. Health literacy techniques, such as not using medical jargon and having the patient (or their caregiver) repeat back their plan-of-care instructions in their own words, can break down communication barriers.

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 CAHPS member survey questions	Industry best-practices for physicians
Coordination of care	
<p>For scheduled appointments, how often did your doctor have your medical records or other information about your care?</p>	<p>Patients report having a more optimal experience when their providers are familiar with their history at the time of their appointments.</p> <p>Offering to walk through registration and use of your patient portal will go a long way in helping patients access their medical records and test results in a timely manner.</p> <p>New and established patients without an appointment in the last year should be encouraged to schedule their Medicare Annual Wellness Visit and a physical to ensure the conversations about their health, medications, and the care they receive from other providers. This will ensure annual preventive exams are scheduled and care is coordinated on behalf of the patient.</p>
<p>When your doctor ordered a blood test, x-ray, or other test for you, how often did:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • someone from the doctor’s office follow-up to give you those results? • you get results as soon as you needed them? 	
<p>How often did your doctor seem informed and up-to-date about the care you got from specialists?</p>	
<p>How often did you and your doctor talk about the prescription medicines you were taking?</p>	
<p>How often did you get the help that you needed from your doctor’s office to manage your care among different providers and services?</p>	
Overall rating of healthcare quality	
<p>Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst health care possible and 10 is the best health care possible, what number would you use to rate all your health care in the last 6 months?</p>	<p>Patient councils are great for helping clinical practices understand the patient’s experience with the practice’s process-improvement initiatives.</p>
Flu shot	
<p>Have you had a flu shot this year?</p>	<p>Patients who are well informed of the benefits and safety of the flu vaccine are more likely to get the vaccine. Knowing it is protective and won’t make them sick also helps.</p>

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Cultural competence	
<p>When you needed an interpreter at your doctor's office or clinic, how often did you get one?</p>	<p>Understand language-preference and interpretation needs in advance of appointments to ensure resources are available.</p>
Getting needed prescription drugs	
<p>How often was it easy to use your prescription drug plan to get the medicines your doctor prescribed?</p>	<p>Consider these factors: drug availability and affordability, timely prescribing and up-to-date patient pharmacy choice. This results in patients getting the drugs they need.</p>
<p>How often was it easy to use your prescription drug plan to fill a prescription at your local pharmacy?</p>	
<p>How often was it easy to use your prescription drug plan to fill a prescription by mail?</p>	
 HOS member survey questions	Industry best-practices for physicians
Improving and maintaining physical health	
<p>In general, would you say your health is: Excellent? Very good? Good? Fair? Poor?</p>	<p>Direct patients to perform specific exercises, use their SilverSneakers benefits or engage in self guided fitness programs.</p> <p>Advise on appropriate types of exercise, duration and intensity.</p>
<p>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?</p>	
<p>During the past four weeks, have you accomplished less than you would like or been limited in your work or other regular daily activities as a result of your physical health?</p>	
<p>During the past four weeks, how much did pain interfere with your normal work (both outside the home and housework)?</p>	

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HOS member survey questions

Industry best-practices for physicians

Monitoring physical activity

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 stairs, increase walking from 10 to 20 minutes every day or maintain your current exercise program.

Aetna offers a “Monitoring physical activity” worksheet for patients. The provider can fill in their exercise recommendations and the patient can then record their physical activity on the sheet.

HOS member survey questions

Industry best-practices for physicians

Improving and maintaining mental health

During the past 4 weeks, have you had any of the following problems with your work or other regular activities as a result of any emotional problems (such as feeling depressed or anxious)?

- a. Accomplish 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

These questions are about how you feel and how things have been with you during the past four weeks. How much time during the past four weeks:

- a. Have you felt calm and peaceful?
- b. Did you have a lot of energy?
- c. Have you felt downhearted or blue?

It's common for patients to be less candid in their responses to questions regarding mental health. Asking twice about their emotional wellness sometimes gives patients the chance to think critically and offer a more accurate response.

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HOS member survey questions

Industry best-practices for physicians

Improving bladder control

Many people experience problems with urinary incontinence, or the leakage of urine. In the past six months, have you accidentally leaked urine?

How much of a problem, if any, was the urine leakage for you?

Have you talked with your current doctor or other health provider about your urine leakage problems?

There are many ways to treat urinary incontinence including bladder training, exercises, medications and surgery. Have you ever talked with a doctor, nurse or other healthcare provider about any of these approaches?

Incontinence can be a difficult subject to approach, but it is important to discuss with your patient. It is more than an inconvenience and can also lead to falls, if not controlled.

Reducing the risk of falls

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?

Patients tend to have fewer falls when they are assessed for gait and balance challenges and receive regular vision and hearing tests.