

MCBS Physical Measures Data Collection – Informational Handout

During your [winter/summer] interview, your interviewer will take four strength and balance measures as well as measures of height and weight. You may be familiar with some of these since they are common measurements that doctors and physical therapists use.

Why are we taking these measures?

Collecting measures like these helps improve our knowledge of the overall health of Medicare beneficiaries. It can also help researchers and policymakers understand physical strength and weakness at different age levels.

What are the measures we are collecting?

1. Balance: you will balance on two feet in three different positions for up to 10 seconds each.
2. Walking speed: you will walk approximately 10 ft. at your normal pace.
3. Sit-stand: you will stand up from a chair without using your arms for support.
4. Grip strength: your interviewer will measure how strong your grip is using a special hand-held device called a dynamometer.
5. Height: your interviewer will measure how tall you are using a measuring tape.
6. Weight: your interviewer will ask you to stand on a scale to measure your weight.

Do I have to do all the measures?

If you are unable or do not want to participate in any specific measures, tell your interviewer and the measure can be skipped. People with certain conditions may not be able to complete some measures. Even if you cannot complete one or more of the measures, it is valuable for us to collect those you are able to do.

What is the purpose of collecting these measures?

Actual measurement of walking speed and balance help us understand increased risk of falls and reduced mobility. Collecting information like this may help policymakers understand how to improve health by adding Medicare coverage for home health care and physical therapy.