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Women's Health

The impact of COVID-19 on wellness

Everyone responds differently to a crisis; and the COVID-19 pandemic has been no exception. Many people, organizations, and companies stepped up to support their communities – neighbor helping neighbor, evening salutes to hospital staff, and special shopping hours for those at high risk, to name a few. When it came to obtaining routine health care, people also responded differently. Some patients chose to utilize telehealth services, while others decided to delay care or not seek health care at all.

According to a February 2021 Urban Institute report, which utilized data from the Coronavirus Tracking Survey (a nationally representative survey of nonelderly adults conducted September 11 – 28, 2020), 36% of adults had delayed or forgone health care due to concern about exposure to COVID-19 or because a healthcare provider offered limited services during the pandemic.[1]

Types of Health Care Adults Ages 18 to 64 Delayed or Did Not Get Because of the Pandemic, September 2020
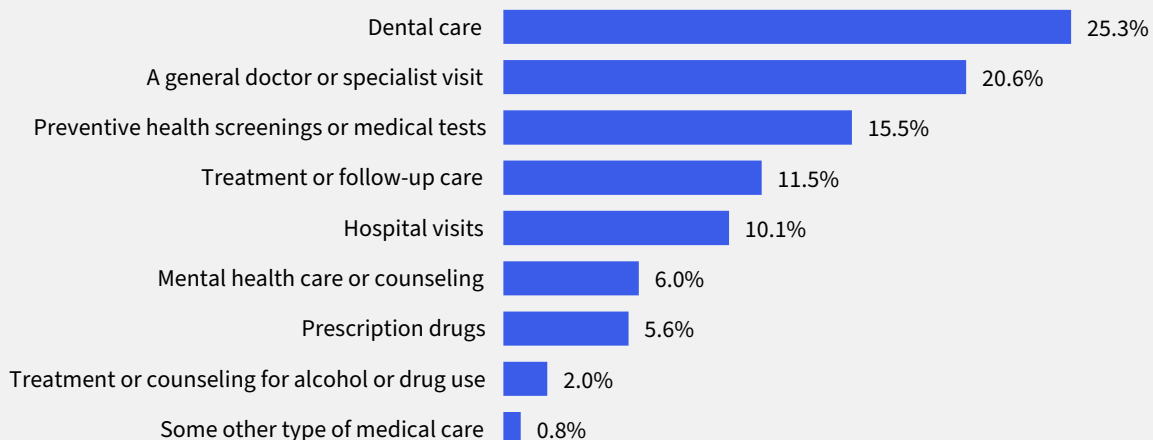
Type of Care	Percentage
Dental care	25.3%
A general doctor or specialist visit	20.6%
Preventive health screenings or medical tests	15.5%
Treatment or follow-up care	11.5%
Hospital visits	10.1%
Mental health care or counseling	6.0%
Prescription drugs	5.6%
Treatment or counseling for alcohol or drug use	2.0%
Some other type of medical care	0.8%

Source: Urban Institute Coronavirus Tracking Survey, wave 2, conducted September 11 through 28, 2020.
Notes: Delayed or forgone health care is care not received because of worry about exposure to the coronavirus or because health care providers limited services because of the pandemic.

Of the adults who had delayed or forgone health care, 76% had one or more chronic health conditions (see table 1). "Nearly one in three adults who delayed or went without care reported it negatively affected their health, ability to work, or ability to perform other daily activities, highlighting the detrimental ripple effects of delaying or forgoing care on overall health, functioning, and well-being."[1]

Table 1. Presence of Chronic Health Conditions among Adults Ages 18 to 64 Delaying or Forgoing Health Care, September 2020

Chronic health conditions	Percent
Has a chronic health condition	**76**
Has a physical health condition	**67.9**
Obesity	34.7
High cholesterol	29.4
Hypertension	28.9
Some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia	20.5
Asthma	13.6
Diabetes (excluding gestational or prediabetes)	10.1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis	4.9
Coronary heart disease, angina, heart attack, or other heart condition	4.9
Cancer	4.1
Chronic kidney disease	3.2
Stroke	2
Liver disease, including cirrhosis	2
Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease	0.9
Cystic or pulmonary fibrosis	0.8
Sickle cell disease or thalassemia	0.4
Has a mental health condition	**36.4**
Any type of anxiety disorder	28.4
Any type of depression	26.4
Any other type of mental health condition	8.5

Source: Urban Institute Coronavirus Tracking Survey, wave 2, conducted September 11 through 28, 2020.
Notes: N = 1,510 adults. Delayed or forgone health care is care not received because of worry about exposure to the coronavirus or because health care providers limited services because of the pandemic.

Bringing patients back to care

As more people become vaccinated and therefore may feel more comfortable to venture out, efforts may still be needed to bring patients back to routine and preventative care. Stories, blogs, and articles have reported instances where patients have experienced detrimental effects of delayed or foregone care.[2,3] So it is important that patients, especially those with chronic conditions, resume seeing their health care provider.[1]

How can you help facilitate bringing patients back to care?

Communication of the safety of your practice and the importance of routine care are key.[4] Here are a few ideas to provide clear patient communication to promote understanding and action.

- Reassure patients that current public health safety precautions are being followed, and that these precautions effectively prevent transmission[1,4]
- Use your website's alert panel or homepage banner to offer timely content and urge patients to resume routine and elective care[3]
- Support and promote telehealth, chronic disease self-management, and care coordination among providers.[1,4]
- Ask a respected or well-known doctor to let you record a video of them explaining why patients shouldn't delay care[3]
- Deliver customized messages to via your patient portal, direct mail, email, or texts[3,4]

Remember, some of your patients may have experienced a pandemic-related job loss and no longer have health insurance. You may need to provide information about financial assistance programs and free or low-cost clinics.[3]

To read the full report by the Urban Institute, please visit **urban.org**

Please visit **labcorp.com** to see how we can support you and your patients with routine and preventive care testing.

📅 May Health Awareness Calendar

- National Women's Health Week (May 9-15)
- Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month
- Pre-eclampsia Awareness Month
- World Ovarian Cancer Day (May 8)
- National Women's Check-Up Day (May 11)
- HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (May 18)
- National Nurses Month

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References

1. Gonzalez D, Karpman M, Kenney GM, Zuckerman S. Delayed and forgone health care for nonelderly adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.urban.org/research/publication/delayed-and-forgone-health-care-nonelderly-adults-during-covid-19-pandemic. Accessed April 1, 2021.
2. Remaly J. Missed visits during pandemic cause 'Detrimental Ripple Effects'. https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/946510. Accessed April 1, 2021.
3. Klosterman C. Bringing Patients Back to the Doctor's Office After COVID-19. https://www.geonetric.com/content-marketing/bringing-patients-back-after-covid-19/. Accessed April 1, 2021.
4. Blank C. How to effectively communicate to get patients back to the office. https://www.physicianspractice.com/view/how-to-effectively-communicate-to-get-patients-back-to-the-office. Accessed April 1, 2021.