

Our Take: Encouraging Employee Routine Care during COVID-19

January 12, 2021

Among reports of pandemic-strained medical resources and calls to stay home, the importance of routine and preventative care can be lost. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other healthcare organizations and providers urge the public not to delay essential health care – if it can be done safely according to local guidance, of course. Employers play an important role in encouraging routine care during COVID-19 by communicating its importance and highlighting available resources, helping to keep employees healthy.

Healthcare organizations have reported reductions in primary care visits in 2020 amid the pandemic, including well visits and cancer screenings. This is unsurprising, and in some areas, a necessary precaution, but experts are starting to worry that this could lead to additional concerns and costs in the future. For example, screenings for breast, colon, and cervical cancers dropped significantly last spring and only rebounded slightly during the summer. Early detection is critical for effective treatment of these diseases.¹

Routine care also helps manage chronic conditions, like diabetes and [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder \(COPD\)](#). In a survey conducted in May, 48% of those surveyed reported skipping or postponing medical care, with 11% saying that the medical condition got worse.² The CDC warns that if this trend continues, “adults could miss opportunities for management of chronic conditions, receipt of routine vaccinations, or early detection of new conditions, which might worsen outcomes.”³

These concerns extend to children as well. The CDC emphasizes the importance of maintaining routine well-child and vaccine visits, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ These visits are essential for tracking a child’s growth and development and ensuring they remain protected against preventable diseases like measles, whooping cough and polio. However, in a September survey 40% of parents say their children missed a vaccine during COVID-19. This has resulted in an estimated 9 million missed doses of childhood inoculations as routine care is delayed.⁵

What can employers do to encourage routine care during COVID-19?

Employers have increasingly offered resources that can help encourage routine care, but employees need to know what they are and how to use them.

¹ [Health Care Cost Institute](#), “The Impact of COVID-19 on the Use of Preventive Health Care”

² [Kaiser Health News](#), “Nearly Half of Americans Delayed Medical Care Due to Pandemic”

³ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), “Delay or Avoidance of Medical Care Because of COVID-19–Related Concerns — United States, June 2020”

⁴ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), “Keep Children Healthy during the COVID-19 Pandemic”

⁵ [Blue Cross Blue Shield Association](#), “Missing Vaccinations during COVID-19 Puts our Children & Communities at Risk”

- The use of [telemedicine](#) has exploded during the pandemic as doctors and patients look for remote solutions to reduce viral exposure. Many of these telemedicine patients are using it for the first time – others may not even know if your organization offers access to the service. Be sure to clearly educate employees on what is offered and how to access it.
- Topic-specific communications campaigns customized for your unique workforce are also effective for informing employees about wellness, benefits resources, and routine care reminders like [flu shots](#).
- Employees may need help finding a new primary care physician or one that better fits their needs. A [benefits concierge](#) can confidentially review their options and help connect them with a doctor, as well as answer many other insurance-related questions.
- If your organization offers an employee assistance program (EAP), this often also covers others in the employee’s household. This could include access to counseling and other resources for employee spouses and dependents.
- [Corporate Synergies](#) also publishes a monthly [wellness blog](#), which employers can forward to their workforce. The infographics, quizzes and articles on health topics and understanding benefits can be valuable resources for employees.

Appropriate employee routine care and regular screenings can help prevent avoidable diseases from developing or worsening.⁶ ■

Follow the conversation with us on [LinkedIn](#). For more information, please call: **877.426.7779**

⁶ [American Medical Association](#), “Preventive Care: As Pandemic Stretches on, ‘No More Time to Wait’”