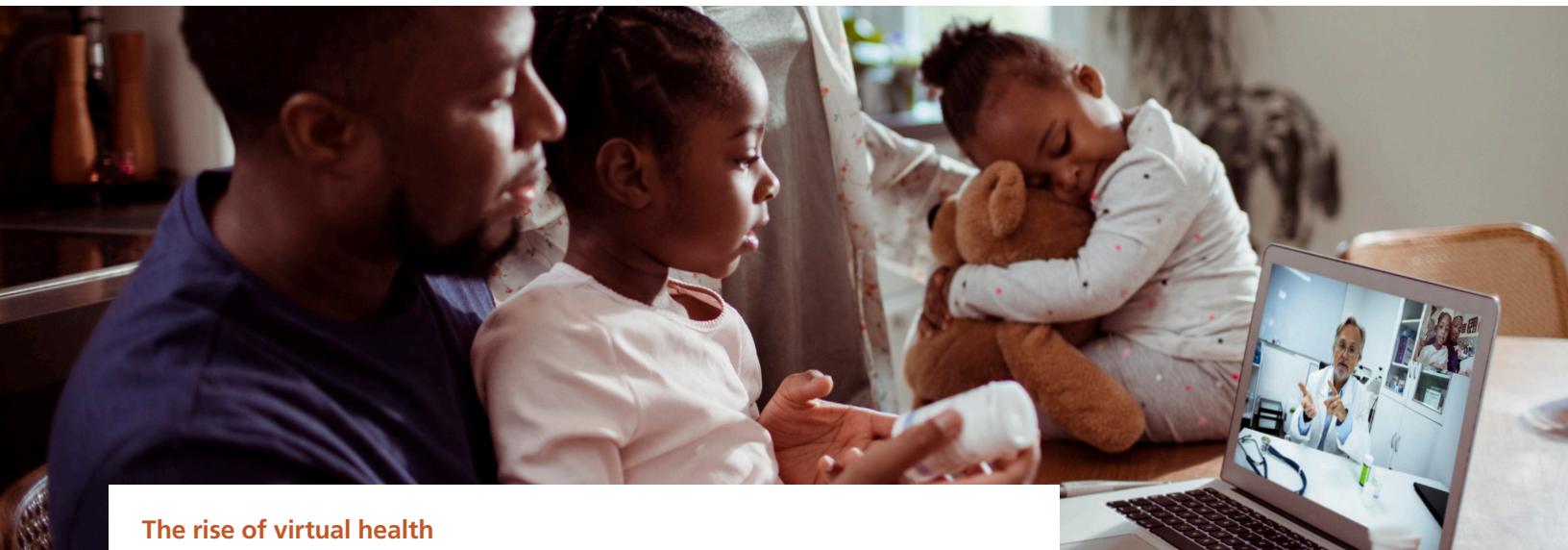


Virtual health: Making it easier to get the care you need



The rise of virtual health

Before 2020, virtual health care was something of a novelty. Few people had tried connecting with their doctor through online video chats, phone appointments or remote patient monitoring. Many lacked the access needed to do so. But the COVID-19 pandemic made it immediately necessary to find a way for physicians and care teams to safely provide ongoing care without seeing patients in person. So virtual health skyrocketed in use and availability.

Virtual health use among Latinos and Black Americans increased significantly during the pandemic. In one study, about 17% of the people who responded reported using telehealth because of the pandemic. There were significantly higher odds among Blacks, Latinos and those identified with other races compared to white participants.¹

Also, Black participants were more likely than whites to report using telehealth because of the pandemic. This was especially true for those who viewed the pandemic as a threat to their health.¹



How can virtual health help you?

Virtual health helps bring medical care to those who otherwise might not be able to access it. Many Spanish-speaking patients are showing an interest in virtual health. It also appeals to:

- People who live far from cities or a clinic
- Parents who have difficulty securing childcare
- Those who face challenges with transportation

Virtual health makes things easier

Connecting to care is now easier and more convenient. The quality of care is better, and frustrations are reduced. Some benefits of virtual health include:

- Ease of scheduling
- Mobile app integration
- Virtual therapies
- Access to care from wherever you are
- Convenient linking of medical services and payment methods
- Cost estimates
- Online test result delivery
- Video rather than in-person follow-up visits
- More equitable access to care for all



Virtual health can help reduce unnecessary trips to the ER

Black, Hispanic and Asian patients are more likely than white patients to wait to be seen in the emergency room for non-emergency conditions.² These include conditions when there isn't an obvious, urgent need to be seen by a provider as soon as possible. Getting care virtually, from the comfort of your own home could save you a trip.

Virtual health can contribute to job stability

1 in 4

Nationally, nearly one in four adults report having lost a job or being told they would lose a job for taking time off due to illness or to care for a sick family member.³



38% of African Americans cannot earn a single paid sick day

Of those who can't earn paid sick days, 41% are Black men and 36% are Black women. When illness strikes, they must risk their jobs and financial stability by staying home. Or they risk their health and the health of their communities by going to work.³

The option of virtual health could offer more convenience for medical care and make maintaining work obligations easier.

You can take steps toward better health for yourself

One way that virtual health is making care more accessible is through your smartphone. There are many apps available to help you manage your health. Most apps are free or have subscriptions available for as low as \$69. To start, try looking into virtual care apps like Dr+ On Demand or Amwell.

Don't have insurance? You can get care through these apps, too!

Optum is working to make advancements in virtual health

The Optum Center for Digital Health is committed to ensuring that new technologies and virtual capabilities work to increase opportunities for care, not decrease them.

Today, Optum has its own digital health platform. And we're building our own virtual medical group — a clinic without walls — that we're launching across 50 states. This means matching the best of what technology can offer with high-quality care. To date, the Optum Center for Digital Health has:

- Added 10,500+ doctors to practice virtual health
- Completed 1.3 million virtual patient visits

The Optum Store is your one-stop-shop for virtual care

Visit store.optum.com where you can get the care, prescriptions and products you need easily at your fingertips. Talk to a doctor for a \$55 virtual visit, get therapy, fill prescriptions and more.



Sources:

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2. Commons J. **Latinos embraced remote mental health visits amid pandemic.** HealthCity. Published May 11, 2021. Accessed September 2021.
3. **Fact sheet: African Americans and their families need paid sick days.** National Partnership for Women & Families. Published January 2017. Accessed November 2021.



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