

A message from Dr. Jonathan Rubens

Chief Medical Officer

September 2020



It's the time of year when we're usually shifting out of vacation mode and getting back to business. This year's transition is somewhat different. New coronavirus hotspots continue to emerge, and social unrest still dominates the nightly news. Even in these times there are things you can do to prioritize your health and well-being.

The doctor can see you now

When the pandemic first struck, our response was to shelter safe at home. That included canceling or putting off health care. Data shows that by April outpatient health care visits had dropped by almost 60%. Some specialists saw a reduction in visits of up to 80%.

Visits were creeping back up by June. Then in June and July the news started covering surges of Coronavirus in some states and health care visits started dropping again in those areas. They held steady in the rest of the country but we're not yet back to where we were before the start of the pandemic.¹

We know that early detection and diagnosis help improve health outcomes for many chronic conditions. One study showed that the weekly detection rates for six kinds of cancer dropped by over 46% between March and April. Undiagnosed diseases and chronic conditions don't stop progressing because we aren't finding and managing them.²

Many doctors feel their patients will experience avoidable illnesses or complications due to delayed or canceled health care.³ Don't be one of them. Call your doctor's office and ask how they're handling patient visits. Let them put your mind at ease and schedule the visits you've been putting off.

Back to school blues

As children of all ages go back to school, it's natural to feel worried about it. Whether your area is trying for in-person learning or teaching from a distance, you may have some concerns about how it's going to work.

Reach out to friends or family and share your feelings. It will give them a chance to share theirs with you as well. Exchanging trust and comfort is a core part of creating and maintaining strong social connections that contribute to our overall well-being.

¹ The Commonwealth Fund. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Outpatient Visits: Changing Patterns of Care in the Newest COVID-19 Hot Spots. Available at <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/2020/aug/impact-covid-19-pandemic-outpatient-visits-changing-patterns-care-newest>. Accessed September 9, 2020.

² Kaufman H, Chen Z, Niles J, Fesko Y. Changes in the Number of US Patients With Newly Identified Cancer Before and During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. Available at https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2768946?utm_campaign=articlePDF&utm_medium=articlePDFlink&utm_source=articlePDF&utm_content=jamanetworkopen.2020.17267. Accessed September 9, 2020.

³ Primary Care Collaborative. Primary Care & COVID-19: Week 8 Survey May 6, 2020. Available at <https://www.pccpc.org/2020/05/06/primary-care-covid-19-week-8-survey>

The flu and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is still with us So, reducing the spread of the flu this fall and winter is more important than ever.

The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months or older. September and October are the best time to get your flu shot. However, any time during the flu season can help protect you.

Getting a flu vaccine:

- Can reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization and death
- Won't protect against COVID-19
- Helps save health care resources for people sick with COVID-19

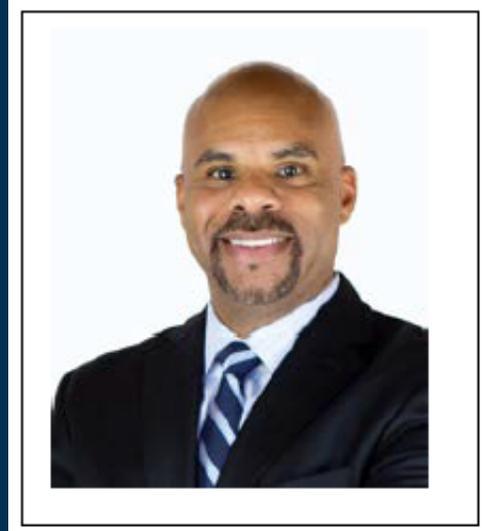
Protect yourself and your loved ones. Get your family vaccinated against the flu this season.

Take time for self-care

What are you doing to take care of yourself these days? Anything you do to take care of your physical and emotional health is self-care. Getting your flu vaccine and reconnecting with your doctor count.

You could also read the book you've been wanting to start. Or enjoy some walks in the cooler air before it starts to get dark early.

Just be aware of how you're feeling physically and emotionally. When you notice a change, make doing something about it a priority. You're worth it.



To your health and well-being,
Jonathan S. Rubens, MD, MHPE, CHIE

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