

Four reasons your employees need virtual primary care

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Primary care is an often overlooked and underutilized healthcare resource that can have massive impact on health outcomes, both for your employees and their families. A primary care provider, more commonly known as a PCP, is key to helping an individual stay healthy and improve their quality of life. PCPs can (and should) act as someone's first point of entry into the healthcare system and first line of defense against chronic conditions and serious illness.

Unfortunately, 1 in 4 people in the U.S. have little to no access to primary care where they live.¹ Without that access, individuals are delaying the care they need, resulting in \$730B in annual healthcare costs driven by preventable disease and illness.²

However, with the rise of telemedicine and an increased focus on virtual primary care, you can help connect your employees to the primary care they need and deserve. Below are four reasons employers should offer a virtual primary care solution.

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PEOPLE HAVE NO ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE WHERE THEY LIVE¹

\$730B

IN ANNUAL HEALTHCARE COSTS DRIVEN BY PREVENTABLE DISEASE AND ILLNESS²

50%

OF ADULTS HAVE AVOIDED AT LEAST ONE COMMON HEALTH SCREENING³

#1: Offer increased accessibility and convenience to primary care

As an employer, incorporating a virtual primary care solution into employee health benefits can open the door for many who may have difficulty accessing any form of primary care. The list of barriers is exhaustive, from provider staffing shortages (resulting in primary care deserts) to lack of health insurance to an inability to take time off work to attend appointments. These issues are often exacerbated in rural or low-income areas, which contributes to ongoing health equity issues.

One major issue that deters people from engaging in primary care altogether is long and inconvenient wait times. The national average wait time to see a PCP is 26 days.⁴ Because virtual primary care eliminates geographical barriers, your employees have access to providers beyond the ones in their ZIP code and, therefore, may be able to get an appointment faster.

Convenience also plays a role in accessing and prioritizing primary care appointments. Your employees all have unique schedules, and it can be difficult for them to find the time for regular appointments with their PCP. Virtual primary care allows for more flexibility when planning a visit around individual needs and routines. With virtual care, people can do entire visits from their home or office, whenever and wherever it's convenient for them.



#2: Enable employees to develop ongoing relationships with PCPs

One of the biggest benefits of primary care is the level of insight a PCP can gather through a continuous relationship. Through regular and ongoing visits, a PCP can:

- Help prevent health issues
- Catch problems before they become severe
- Manage existing conditions
- Connect the dots to other care that may be needed

But this won't work as successfully if your employees are delaying or avoiding care.

Virtual primary care is an easier way to have valuable time with a PCP anytime, anywhere. It can also increase the number of interactions your employee has with their primary care team throughout the year. For example, at Teladoc Health, our members have an average of 12-15⁵ care team interactions per year—far more than the once-a-year check-up appointment that has become commonplace for most Americans. Over time, as your employees meet with the same PCP, they can establish a trusted relationship with that provider.

#3: Improve long-term outcomes with integrated care

Virtual primary care is an important first step to improving health outcomes for your employees, but care options should not stop there. Sometimes, additional care—including in-person services—may be needed.

Providing integrated care that is straightforward and accessible empowers your employees to manage every aspect of their health without needing to interface with an often overcomplicated healthcare ecosystem. Strong virtual care offerings will ensure your employees are connected to cost-efficient, high-quality care in their network and can help connect the dots for your employees to fully utilize other health benefits based on their clinical needs. This integrated model can help with things like lab tests, chronic condition management, cancer screenings, fertility benefits and mental healthcare.

The integration of physical and mental healthcare is key to improving employee engagement and overall health outcomes.

Your employees may be more inclined to take advantage of these benefits if they are conveniently offered in one place, as 78% of consumers prefer one single solution for physical and mental health.⁶ Mental health screenings must be embedded into the primary care intake process, and PCPs should be discussing mental health concerns during regular check-ins. The clinical outcomes demonstrate the power of this integrated approach: at Teladoc Health, we have seen reductions in blood pressure and A1c levels, for example, when our members treat mental and physical health together.

The more integrated the virtual primary care offering is with other healthcare services, the more impactful the outcomes will be for your employees.



#4: Experience long-term savings by catching conditions and diseases earlier

When combining all of these benefits—convenient and accessible primary care, trusted relationships between your employee and their PCP and integrated care—you can do your part to lower overall healthcare costs.

Our primary care providers at Teladoc Health have engaged with many members who have not previously had a relationship with a PCP. By providing effective primary care services, they have helped diagnose these members with chronic conditions for the first time and enroll them in disease management programs. This vital relationship between an individual and a PCP can help prevent disease state progression, avoid unnecessary and costly trips to the ER and empower your employees to live healthier lives.

Virtual primary care can be a powerful tool for employers and employees alike, with the possibility of transforming how and when people receive the care they need. In today's complex, costly and ever-changing healthcare landscape, it's time to give your employees a better shot at better healthcare.

¹Health Resources and Services Administration, January 2023

²The cost of preventable disease in the USA. Galea, Sandro et al. The Lancet Public Health, Volume 5, Issue 10, e513 - e514

³Fierce Healthcare. Half of US adults skip common health screenings, including tests for certain diseases, survey finds. July, 7 2023

⁴AMN Healthcare/Merritt Hawkins. 2022 Survey of Physician Appointment and Wait Times and Medicare and Medicaid Acceptance Rates. September 12, 2022

⁵Teladoc Health data [DS-12531]

⁶Survey conducted on behalf of Teladoc Health by TRC Market Research, April 8-20, 2021

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About Teladoc Health: Teladoc Health is on a mission to empower all people everywhere to live their healthiest lives. As the world leader in whole-person virtual care, the company leverages its 20+ years of expertise and data-driven insights to meet the growing needs of consumers and healthcare professionals across the full care continuum, at every stage in a person's health journey.

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