



CHI Health

Special Edition  
COVID-19 Coronavirus

# better you

I M A G I N E T H A T .



Virtual Visits from  
the comfort  
of home

Why putting off  
care puts you  
at risk

May 2020  
CHIhealth.com



## We are here for you

To say COVID-19 turned our lives upside down is an understatement. Everyone has been impacted by changes whether it is working remotely, homeschooling children, having vacation and extracurricular activities canceled, facing fears about your health and so much more.

As your health partner, we are here to give you accurate information, help you maintain your physical and mental health and care for you if you face an illness.

We want you to know it is safe to see your provider. And if you're still not comfortable leaving your home to do that, we now have Virtual Visits for you!

No matter what's happening in the world, our Mission at CHI Health remains constant and steadfast: to care for our communities.

Read on to discover how we're making care safe for you and your family.

# Putting off care?

## Risks are real



Sam knew he should have a follow-up visit with his doctor. He'd recently suffered a heart attack but was feeling good. He was one of many who put off care because he didn't want to leave the house. He was scared of being exposed to COVID-19.

"We've had hundreds of patients cancel appointments over the last month," said Cardiologist Jeff Carstens, MD, Vice President of Medical Operations, CHI Health Heart Institute. "Most of these were routine but some were follow-up visits after procedures and appointments that should be kept."

Sam is not alone. One national medical journal found a 38 percent drop in patients being treated for life-threatening heart attacks called STEMIs, the blockage of a major artery.

"We believe people are still suffering from the same heart issues as before, but they're choosing not to come in," said Michael Schooff, MD, CHI Health Primary Care Medical Director.

Public health experts are also concerned about parents delaying children's immunizations because it puts kids at risk for measles, whooping cough and other life-threatening illnesses. In fact, all

appointments for children should be kept for vaccination reasons.

"The immunization schedule is designed to provide short term protection as well as long term immunity," said CHI Health Pediatrician Kathryn Free, DO. "Delaying vaccines leaves children unprotected, at ages where they are most at risk, for serious illness, lifelong disability, or death due to vaccine-preventable diseases."

Others postponing visits are diabetics who need routine care, people putting off cancer screenings, and patients with stroke symptoms, inflamed appendixes and more.

Some try to "tough it out" – which could make their condition worse, with unnecessary suffering, said Dr. Schooff. Getting care instead of allowing a condition to worsen can be a life-saving decision. "You don't want to become a preventable death," he said.

Dr. Schooff recommends that people not put off their care any longer. "It is okay to see your provider in their office. Your risk of getting sick from coming to a doctor's visit is less than that of going to the grocery store or gas station."

Not sure if you should be seen? Call your provider for sound advice.



## Making care safe: Our #1 priority

Walking into a CHI Health clinic or hospital is different now, compared to three months ago. The changes were made to protect you, so you can feel confident walking in our doors. And many will continue as we adjust to our “new normal.”

- A screener will meet you at the door and ask about your exposure or if you have any symptoms of COVID-19. Those at risk are escorted to an isolated space for care or sent home with follow-up instructions.
  - Masks are worn by providers and staff. Patients can wear a mask from home, or one will be provided when they enter a clinic or hospital.
  - “Sick” and “healthy” patients are kept separated in clinic waiting areas and, when possible, scheduled for different times of the day.
  - Waiting room time is minimized. “Oftentimes we will even have patients wait in their vehicles and
- we call them on their cell phones when we are ready to see them. That means no more lingering in our lobbies,” said CHI Health Orthopedic Surgeon Matt Dilisio, MD.
  - Six foot “social distancing” is in place. You’ll notice spacing at check-in and in waiting rooms.
  - All physicians, staff and health care workers undergo daily monitoring of fever and symptoms and report to work only when they are well and symptom-free.
  - Hand washing is frequent. “We have been proactive on showing what we are doing, like washing our hands in front of patients,” said CHI Health Division Vice President of Clinic Operations Julie Gernetzke. “Communication and visibility are really important.”
  - Cleaning is constant. “We have always been careful to keep our clinics clean, but we have increased

those efforts during this time,” said Michael Schooff, MD, CHI Health Primary Care Medical Director. We are regularly disinfecting surfaces large and small - from clinic door handles to entire waiting areas.

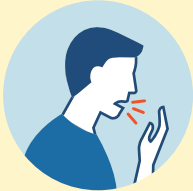
While some of these changes are temporary, you’ll see many of them indefinitely, if not permanently.

**“A lot of what we are doing now we will continue into the future,” said Gernetzke. “In many ways this has created a ‘new normal’ and we will continue to be proactive to ensure we provide a safe environment for patients, communities and our teams.”**

Symptoms of COVID-19



Fever



Cough



Headache



Sore Throat



Chills



Shortness of Breath



Muscle Aches



Loss of Smell & Taste

## Could It Be COVID-19?

If you believe you have been exposed to Coronavirus or are experiencing symptoms, take our online risk assessment at [CHIhealth.com/Coronavirus](http://CHIhealth.com/Coronavirus), or call your CHI Health provider.



## Elective surgery: New precautions protect you

All elective surgeries, such as hernia repair and knee replacements, were canceled to ensure hospitals had the resources to care for critically ill COVID-19 patients.

With COVID-19 cases being managed and equipment and supplies – including masks and other personal protective equipment – in place, it is now safe to resume elective surgeries. We have special measures in place to ensure your safety.



- All surgery patients will be tested for COVID-19 prior to their surgery. This eliminates the concern about exposure from someone not showing symptoms.



- You will be kept separate from patients receiving care for COVID-19 during your entire hospital stay.



- As always, our operating rooms and surgical and anesthesia equipment undergo the most stringent sterilization procedures.

If you have concerns about an elective procedure, talk to your provider. It's important to us that you feel safe receiving care in our facilities.

# Feeling down?

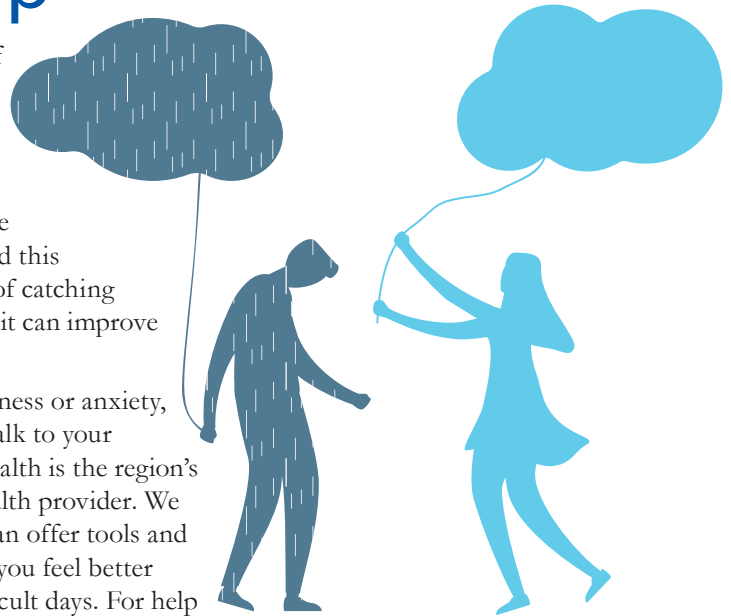
## We care and can help

If you are not in a healthy state of mind, you are at a higher risk for physical problems. Our providers routinely ask patients about their mental health, and that continues during this time of uncertainty.

“We try to discuss the emotional toll that these times may have on our patients,” said CHI Health Obstetrician/Gynecologist John Cote, MD. Staying on top of the news is important, he said, “but because news of the pandemic is plastered everywhere 24/7, we ask patients to try to take a break from the news and get some fresh air.”

Take advantage of the beautiful spring days. “Open the windows and let the sun and breeze in. Not only could this decrease the risk of catching the virus but also it can improve your mood.”

For persistent sadness or anxiety, don't hesitate to talk to your provider. CHI Health is the region's largest mental health provider. We understand and can offer tools and strategies to help you feel better despite these difficult days. For help and answers, call 402-717-HOPE.



## Saluting Our Safety Experts

A multidisciplinary team of experts worked together to establish the refined processes and precautions which keep our patients and staff safe during this unprecedented pandemic. We salute these infectious disease, critical care and pulmonary specialists from CHI Health and our academic partner, Creighton University School of Medicine. Their guidance provides peace of mind as we continue to care for our community.



### Critical Care/Pulmonary Physicians, Faculty

Zachary DePew, MD  
Naresh Dewan, MD  
Adam Highley, MD  
Nikhil Jagan, MBBS  
Afoma King, MD  
Bryan Krajicek, MD  
Carolina Landeen, MD  
Douglas Moore, MD  
Lee Morrow, MD

Shraddha Narechania, MBBS  
Suchitra Pilli, MD  
Robert Plambeck, MD  
Venketraman Sahasranaman, MD  
Salam Salman, MD  
Michael Sanley, MD  
Dennis Thiel, MD  
Stanley Thomas, DO

### Infectious Disease Physicians, Faculty

Maher Alchreiki, MD  
Marvin Bittner, MD  
Paul Gobbo, MD  
Gary Gorby, MD  
John Horne, MD  
Neil Mendoza, MD  
David Quimby, MD  
Manasa Velagapudi, MBBS  
Renuga Vivekanandan, MD



# Virtual Visits:

## Care from the Comfort of Home

“The genie has been let out of the bottle.”

Virtual Visits with your provider are here to stay, according to CHI Health Orthopedic Surgeon Matt Dilisio, MD.

“The pandemic is going to change the way we deliver health care in many ways. One positive change is how providers are using telemedicine.”

The “genie” he refers to is a virtual doctor visit using a computer or cell phone. The patient and Dr. Dilisio see and talk with each other using Zoom, a video conferencing tool. He’s visited with patients at their work, their home and – in one memorable case – a fast food parking lot.

He says his patients love the virtual doctor visits. “We see a large number

of patients from western Nebraska and other locations who travel several hours to get to us. This is going to be tremendously more convenient for them for both initial visits and follow-ups.”

Another doctor whose patients appreciate Virtual Visits is CHI Health Obstetrician/Gynecologist John Cote, MD.

“Virtual Visits fit perfectly into the social distancing paradigm,” he said, because it allows patients who are concerned about coming to the clinic the option to still see their doctor. “And it’s also convenient for the patient to not have to leave his or her home or place of employment.”

While not all appointments are appropriate for Virtual Visits, he said,

it’s a good option when the provider deems it appropriate.

Another physician said not only are the visits convenient, they’re good for providers.

“They miss their patients and truly care about their patients,” said Michael Schooff, MD, CHI Health Primary Care Medical Director.

After recent weeks of semi-isolation, he said there’s a joy in the patient and provider being together again – even if only virtually. “It lets providers and patients reconnect and video strengthens that connection beyond what a phone call does. Everyone I talk to smiles when they talk of their experiences.”



### Virtual Visits you can have from the comfort of home\*:

- Annual wellness checks
- Routine care for adults and children
- Heart care, blood pressure and cholesterol management
- Diabetes management
- Women's and pregnancy care
- Orthopedic follow-up care
- Mental health therapy

\*As determined appropriate by your provider.



### It's safe and important not to delay:

- Asthma/COPD care
- Chronic pain management
- Colonoscopies
- Dependency care (alcohol/drug addiction)
- Immunizations
- Mammograms
- Mental health care
- Urgent surgical procedures

## “Virtual Visits fit perfectly into the social distancing paradigm”

There are times when providers need to listen to patients' hearts and lungs, examine their abdomens and extremities, check their vital signs, perform procedures and more. That's when patients need to come to the office, according to Dr. Schooff.

But that's not every time. And providers appreciate being able to reach out to patients in the comfort of their homes, easing their concerns while providing care and a genuine connection.

“Isn't that what we want – now of all times – to bring joy and happiness in our lives and in the lives of others?”

## Stay on Schedule: Childhood Immunizations

Delaying immunizations can put your child at risk for life-threatening illnesses. Check with your doctor about recommended schedules for important vaccines, including:

- » Chickenpox (varicella) vaccine
- » Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTaP) vaccine
- » Hepatitis A (HepA) vaccine
- » Hepatitis B (HepB) vaccine
- » Hib vaccine
- » Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine
- » Influenza vaccine
- » Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine
- » Meningococcal vaccines
- » Pneumococcal vaccine (PCV)
- » Polio vaccine (IPV)
- » Rotavirus vaccine



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# Visit with your doctor from home.



Keep your health care on schedule by connecting with your primary care doctor or specialist through a CHI Health Virtual Visit. Each virtual visit is done through a secure video conference or phone call right on your device from the safety and convenience of your home.

### Schedule an appointment directly with your clinic:

1. Call your doctor's office to schedule your appointment. New to CHI Health? We are accepting new patients. Visit [CHIhealth.com/Clinic](http://CHIhealth.com/Clinic) to find a doctor.
2. Receive your appointment confirmation via email with instructions for a video or phone visit.
3. Log or dial in, see your doctor and start feeling better!

***With Virtual Visits, there's no reason to delay care. Try it today!***

**Learn more at [CHIhealth.com/VirtualVisits](http://CHIhealth.com/VirtualVisits)**

*Check your insurance for telehealth rates and co-pays.*

## Hospital Locations

### NEBRASKA

#### Grand Island

CHI Health St. Francis

#### Kearney

CHI Health Good Samaritan

### Lincoln

CHI Health St. Elizabeth

CHI Health Nebraska Heart

### Nebraska City

CHI Health St. Mary's

### Omaha

CHI Health Creighton  
University Medical Center  
- Bergan Mercy

CHI Health Immanuel

CHI Health Lakeside

CHI Health Midlands

### Plainview

CHI Health Plainview

### Schuyler

CHI Health Schuyler

### IOWA

#### Corning

CHI Health Mercy Corning

#### Council Bluffs

CHI Health Mercy  
Council Bluffs

#### Missouri Valley

CHI Health Missouri Valley

[CHIhealth.com](http://CHIhealth.com)