

Heart patients avoiding care during pandemic: survey

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Many Americans with heart disease are avoiding medical care during the

pandemic, a new survey finds.

Only 52% of Americans sought [medical care](#) for a concerning health problem during the pandemic, according to the survey conducted by the Cleveland Clinic. Among patients with [heart disease](#), 63% did.

Many sought advice online or from friends and family instead of a doctor—even though 32% of Americans and 53% of [heart disease patients](#) had at least one troubling symptom such as increased [blood pressure](#), dizziness, shortness of breath or increased [blood sugar](#), the survey found.

Fear of contracting COVID-19 was the main reason for avoiding medical care.

About 85% of Americans worry about getting COVID-19 while at a doctor's office, the survey found. Also, 1 in 3 heart patients have put off taking their heart medications. The top reason: Fear of going to the doctor during the pandemic.

"The concerning trend we saw in this year's survey is that the very people who should not be avoiding the doctor during a pandemic are doing just that," said Dr. Samir Kapadia, chairman of cardiovascular medicine.

"Ignoring symptoms of heart disease or not maintaining regular health checks like blood pressure or cholesterol screenings can lead to serious health consequences, especially if you have preexisting conditions," he added in a clinic news release.

The survey also found that 52% of Americans and 65% of [heart patients](#) avoided screenings or checkups because of the pandemic. The most common appointments being postponed were dental screenings, annual physicals and blood pressure and cholesterol checks.

Many respondents said they had packed on the pounds and felt more stress because of the pandemic—42% of all Americans and 47% of heart disease patients gained weight, according to the survey.

Among those who gained weight, 25% put on more than 20 pounds.

Three-quarters reported feeling more stress. About 55% were aware that stress can have a substantial effect on their heart health.

The survey also found:

- 61% were unaware that heart disease increases the risk for severe COVID-19.
- 69% didn't know that [high blood pressure](#) also increases COVID-19 risk.
- 33% falsely believe only people with a preexisting heart condition are at risk of long-term heart effects from COVID-19.
- 25% incorrectly believe COVID-19 only affects the lungs, not the heart.

However, the survey uncovered some good news: Some Americans have adopted new health habits during the pandemic. They include taking vitamins or supplements (35%); exercising more (32%); and eating a healthier diet (30%).

More information: For more on seeing your doctor during the pandemic, see the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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