

What to expect and prepare for as you return to regular health care appointments

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Over the past year-plus of quarantining, many people have avoided leaving their homes as much as possible, not even to see their health care provider for regular checkups and other preventive care. As COVID-19

cases in the U.S. drop, some are wondering how to prepare for non-COVID-related doctor's visits. Paul O'Rourke, M.D., M.P.H., an assistant professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the associate program director of the Johns Hopkins Bayview Internal Medicine Residency Program, has some suggestions.

Reflect on your major health questions and concerns before the appointment. "Write them down so you can review them during your visit," O'Rourke says. "After a long time away, it's helpful to come prepared and ensure you address the issues important to you."

Bring a list of your current medications and supplements, as well as documentation of any vaccines (including the COVID-19 vaccine) that you may have received elsewhere. "This enables your physician to update your records and ensure you are current with recommendations," says O'Rourke.

Prepare for certain aspects of your appointment to be different. "For example, waiting rooms have been rearranged to maintain physical distancing," O'Rourke says. "Nurses and doctors wear facial coverings now. And some clinics will ask to conduct a COVID-19 screening prior to your appointment."

"Hesitancy is understandable," O'Rourke adds. "This has been a very stressful time for everyone. But, it is important for patients to return to medical and preventive care services—and to know that all [medical clinics](#) have precautions in place to minimize the risk of acquiring COVID-19."

O'Rourke cites three primary reasons for patients to return to their doctors: to address any current health concerns; to address any chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes or [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](#); and to receive preventive health screenings.

For those still concerned about returning to their doctor, O'Rourke encourages them to contact their physician's office.

"Your health care providers want you to be safe," he says. "Reach out to them and ask for information about their COVID-19 safety procedures if you need reassurance about coming back."

Provided by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

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