

# Higher use of health care portal seen during COVID-19 pandemic

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Health care portal use was higher during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study published online on Feb. 29 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Esther Yoon, Ph.D., M.P.H., from the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago, and colleagues examined the prevalence of health care portal use before, during, and after the most restrictive phase of the pandemic (2019 to 2022) among the COVID-19 & Chronic Conditions cohort. The analyses included 536 middle-aged and older adult primary care patients with multiple [chronic conditions](#)

who had an active portal account.

The researchers found that compared with the 2019 baseline, portal login activity was higher during the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic in multivariable analyses. There was an association observed for higher portal login activity with adequate health literacy and multimorbidity (incidence rate ratios, 1.51 and 1.38, respectively).

Associations were seen for lower portal activity with older age (70 years or older) and female sex (incidence rate ratios, 0.69 and 0.70, respectively). Lower portal activity was also seen among Hispanic or Latinx patients, non-Hispanic Black patients, and those who identified as other race compared with non-Hispanic White patients (incidence rate ratios, 0.66, 0.68, and 0.42, respectively).

"As telehealth and digital health tools continue to be an integral part of health care systems, future research would benefit from evaluating and optimizing digital literacy challenges as a potential barrier to portal adoption and use, as well as optimizing access to reliable internet or [broadband services](#), particularly for communities that have historically had poor digital access due to limitations in neighborhood infrastructure," the authors write.

**More information:** Esther Yoon et al, Disparities in Patient Portal Use Among Adults With Chronic Conditions, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.0680](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.0680)

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