

1 in 3 Americans delayed, skipped medical care during pandemic

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If you've put off or skipped needed medical care during the COVID-19

pandemic, you've got plenty of company.

More than a third of U.S. adults say they have delayed or gone without care either because they fear exposure to the virus or because [health care services](#) are harder to come by, two new surveys found.

The same reasons led nearly as many parents to avoid care for their kids.

"Prolonged gaps in needed [medical care](#) lead to [adverse health outcomes](#) and could create long-term economic challenges as we navigate out of the pandemic," said Mona Shah, senior program officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which funded the surveys conducted by the Urban Institute, a nonprofit research organization.

"As fears of contracting the coronavirus in [clinical settings](#) subside, it will be vital that families have access to [affordable health care](#) and not delay care any longer due to financial concerns," Shah said in a foundation news release.

The surveys, conducted in September, revealed that the delays came with a cost.

A third of adults who said they had delayed or went without care reported that one or more of their [health problems](#) had worsened as a result, or that their ability to work or do other daily activities had been limited.

Black adults were more likely than white or Hispanic adults to [delay](#) or forgo care (39.7% versus 34.3% and 35.5%, respectively).

Among adults with one or more chronic health conditions, 40.7% said they delayed or went without care, the survey found. More than half (56.3%) of adults with both a physical and mental health condition had

also put off care.

Dental care was the most common casualty (25.3%). One in five adults delayed or went without a visit to a general doctor or specialist, and 15.5% delayed or went without preventive care.

Among parents with kids under age 19, more than a quarter said they had postponed or missed one or more types of health care appointments for their kids; 15.6% said they had delayed or skipped multiple types of care for their children.

This was more likely among lower-income parents (19.6%) than among those with higher incomes (11.4%).

The findings are from the Urban Institute's Coronavirus Tracking Survey, a nationally representative survey of 18- to 64-year-olds and parents with kids under age 19.

Dulce Gonzalez, a research associate at the Urban Institute, said the pandemic has caused kids, especially those in low-income families, to miss out on a range of health needs.

"These gaps in care could harm children's health, development, and well-being—but targeted efforts to make up for missed care could help avoid exacerbating socioeconomic inequities," she said in the release.

More information: The Mayo Clinic offers advice on [seeing your doctor during the pandemic](#).

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