

## Template: Letter for Patients: Don't Delay Care

Please, call your doctor,

As COVID-19 continues to affect daily life we'd like to take a moment to encourage you to please call your doctor. Even if you don't have symptoms of COVID -19, and especially if you're one of the (# here) Bostonians who have one or more chronic illnesses, you should seriously consider reaching out to your PCP's office to schedule a visit. There has been a lot of coverage of hospitals increasing capacity to care for sick COVID-19 patients, and at least locally, our preparations and sacrifices have been paying off. Thankfully we have enough beds and ventilators to go around and by current estimates, we may be on the back side of the initial surge. What worries us though, is the observation that we've seen a 70% reduction in heart attacks and new cancer diagnosis (confirm stats). This drop does not indicate a miraculous curing of cancer or heart disease, instead it suggests a more ominous threat looming in the not too distant future, a wave of acutely decompensating chronic illness.

There is hope though, and it's a far cry from the sacrifices of social distancing measures. Your primary care doctor is standing by to help you by doing what they do best, help you manage your chronic illness and preventing hospitalization. Historically, in order to prevent you from being admitted to the hospital we asked you to come to our office three to four times a year so we could adjust your medication, check your vital signs and provide counseling. With the arrival of COVID on the scene, however, it's never been easier to receive primary care in the comfort of your own home. Telemedicine is here and offered widely, and your PCP, along with a team of medical pharmacists, social workers, nurses and population health specialists can remote into your home at your convenience to do all of the important work to keep you safe at home. No parking, no traffic, no crowded waiting rooms, no lines.

So if you're reading this and wondering, if you should call your doctor, we've put together a simple check list to help.

- How frequently did you see or speak with your PCP before COVID? If it's been at least that long you should schedule a virtual appointment.
- Do you have a new health problem or symptom that is not improving? It likely this can be evaluated virtually without ever requiring a physical visit.
- Do you take more than 5 prescription medications?
- Do you have a diagnosis of heart failure, diabetes, depression, anxiety, hypertension, asthma, COPD or chronic kidney disease, or HIV?
- Are you having issues with housing, food security, feeling safe at home., or paying for your medications? Your primary care provider can help you find and access resources to help.
- Are you running low on medications, or do you have so many you can't remember how or when to take them? You should call your PCP
- Are you looking at this list and still not sure if you should call your doctor? Then call your PCP.

Primary care doctors live to keep you out of the hospital. COVID-19 did not magically eliminate diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, depression, asthma or COPD, but it did make easy for all of us to neglect them for a while. It would be a tragedy if we survived the global COVID-19 pandemic only to be overrun by a wave of familiar and treatable illness. We're here for you. Call us.