

Child Health Care During COVID-19: Findings from the Family Strengths Research Study

Child Health Care: Children have health needs that continue even during COVID-19. These include taking care of new symptoms (like a fever or rash) and chronic medical conditions (like asthma and ADHD). It is also important to keep track of children's growth, development, and mental health and to keep their shots up to date.



How are Families Meeting their Children's Health Care Needs? The [Family Strengths Survey](#) asks parents and caregivers in Western Pennsylvania weekly about how their family is doing. At the end of April, **36% of families** felt that they could not keep their children's medical issues under control. Also, **5% of families needed more health care** than they could get in the past week. Another 5% of families needed more assistance with medications, medical supplies, or durable medical equipment.

Families talked about their efforts to get health care for their children during COVID-19:

- *"Not allowing the pandemic panic to prevent us from accessing the healthcare that we still need..."*
- *"Getting my son's recently diagnosed ADHD attended to, getting my daughter's rash diagnosed..."*
- *"We have definitely continued our online therapy and doctor appointments. I am thinking of increasing therapy appointments temporarily..."*

Families shared some ways they have received care or would like to receive care during this time:

- *"Mail order pharmacies," "Would be nice to communicate with docs through email."*
- *"Being able to video chat with my daughter's pediatrician was a big help."*

Need care for your child? Primary care offices are prepared to see your child safely.

For example, the [Pennsylvania Pediatric Health Network](#) (PPHN) is a network of pediatric practices across Western Pennsylvania. Practices are following local and national guidance caring for children safely during COVID-19, which include:

- Seeing young children in the office or clinic for **well child checks** and **shots**.
- Keeping offices clean, waiting rooms empty, and patients masked and apart.
- Offering **video visits** to provide care at home when possible, for reasons like
 - Sick concerns like coughs, colds, rashes, fevers.
 - Questions about development, sleep, behavior, or mood.
 - Health issues like ADHD, asthma, eczema or other chronic conditions

PPHN practices offering **telemedicine**: [Children's Community Pediatrics](#), [Kids Plus](#), [Pediatrics South](#), [AHN-Pediatrics Pediatric Alliance](#), [Sewickley Valley Pediatrics](#), [CHP Specialty Care](#), [CHP Primary Care Centers](#).



Other tips for safely getting health care during COVID-19:

- Many practices have secure messaging or email options – ask how to sign up for a **"patient portal."**
- Ask for **90-day supply** on daily medications, and consider using **mail-order pharmacies**.
- Reliable online information on children's health: <https://www.healthychildren.org/>.

About this Study: The Family Strengths Study is a weekly survey of parents or expecting parents in Western PA. The study is a collaboration between UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHP), University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), United Way, and the Allegheny County Health Department and Department of Human Services. This survey is part of the Pittsburgh Study and made possible through support from the CHP Foundation, Pitt Department of Pediatrics, The Grable Foundation, and The Shear Family Foundation. For more information, visit <https://www.pediatrics.pitt.edu/family-strengths-survey>.



Who do I contact for more information?

For more information please contact: Family Strengths Survey team at PGHstudy@pitt.edu.

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Additional resources to help with getting care for your child during the pandemic:

HEALTH INFORMATION

- Pediatrician-approved **online health information** is available at <https://www.healthychildren.org/>
Healthychildren.org information about coronavirus and children is [here](#).
Healthychildren.org information about other common childhood illnesses is [here](#).
- **Call your child's doctor** if you have questions – offices and clinics and doctors want to hear from you.
- If you are concerned about **COVID-19 symptoms** and do not have a primary care doctor, call the PA Department of Health hotline at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258).

HEALTH INSURANCE

- **Medicaid:**
<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome>
- **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP):**
<http://www.chipcoverspakids.com/ApplyandRenew/Pages/Apply.aspx>
- **Consumer Health Coalition**, a Pittsburgh-based group who works to connect individuals and families to health insurance and resources:
Phone: 412 456 1877
<http://consumerhealthcoalition.org/get-involved/partner-with-chc/>
- If your child does not have insurance and you are concerned about the cost of care, here are two additional options:
 - o **Birmingham Free Clinic** provides preventive health care to patients without insurance, and also has health insurance navigators to help your child get insurance.
Hours are limited during COVID-19, so call in advance: 412 481 7900 ext 281
<https://birminghamfreeclinic.wordpress.com>
 - o **Federally qualified health centers** provide care to patients without insurance at reduced costs.
To find a health center near you, <https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov>

HOTLINES

- **Covid-19 symptoms:** If you or your child is experiencing symptoms and you are concerned about COVID-19, please call your primary care provider. If you do not have a primary care provider, call the PA Department of Health hotline at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (724-3258).
- **Poison Control Center:** (800) 222-1222
- Concerns about child abuse or neglect: (412) 473-2000 or (800) 932-0313. This number is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Calls can be made anonymously.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 799-7233 (SAFE) or text LOVEIS to 22522.
- For **crisis services** in Allegheny County, call the Resolve Crisis Network: (888) 796-8226
 - o For crisis hotlines in other counties, [click here](#). Crisis Text Line: text PA to 741-741
 - o National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800) 273-8255
 - o Linea Nacional de Prevencion del Suicidio: (888) 628-9454
 - o Disaster Distress Helpline (800) 985-5990

Not finding what you need? Call 2-1-1 and let the United Way team know what you need and how to help.



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