

Talking to your patients about transportation challenges

You want to give your patients the chance to achieve their best health, but seeing them thrive can be tricky when you're not seeing them at their scheduled time.

Missed appointments not only hurt the physician-patient relationship, but are also connected to higher medical costs for patients, delayed care, and more emergency room visits.¹

According to the American Hospital Association, the leading cause of patient no-shows is lack of medical transportation.¹ When your patients can't get a ride to their appointments, lab tests or the pharmacy, they often become nonadherent to treatment plans and medication.

For seniors and those with chronic illness, getting around matters^{1,2}



Nearly 8.4 million seniors depend on others for their transportation.



3.6 million Americans are unable to obtain medical care due to transportation barriers.



When older adults are asked about barriers to care, transportation is **the third most frequently** mentioned obstacle.

A lack of transportation can impact healthcare access, leading to poorer management of chronic illness—and thus, poorer health outcomes.³ It can also exacerbate other social determinants of health,¹ such as accessing healthy foods, limiting participation of social activities with others and obtaining employment.



Screening your patients for transportation barriers

During annual wellness exams or regular appointments with patients, use the questions below to screen them for transportation barriers:⁴

1.

In the last 30 days, has lack of transportation kept you from medical appointments?
a. Yes b. No

2.

In the last 30 days, has a lack of transportation kept you from attending social events (like going to church or your nearby senior center) or getting things needed for daily living (like shopping for groceries or clothes)?
a. Yes b. No

Calculation: A response of “yes” to either question should trigger a referral for transportation. Take note whether a referral is needed for medical or non-medical transportation because support services may vary.

When patients screen positive for transportation barriers, you can help

If your practice doesn't offer transportation services, consider screening and evaluating your panel for transportation needs. If the need is significant, there are often community programs you can partner with to offer transportation services to your patients. Not only will this provide access to healthcare services, it can also create more opportunities to boost healthy activity and behaviors.

You can refer patients to the following resources:

- **Patients' medical insurance**

Some health plan benefits may provide nonemergency medical transportation. The patient should call the number on the back of their medical insurance ID card to see what benefits or community resources may be available.

- **Eldercare and Area Agencies on Aging**

Alert your patients to these resources. They address the needs and concerns—including transportation challenges—of all older persons at the regional and local levels.

www.eldercare.acl.gov

800-677-1116 (TTY: 711),

Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 8 p.m.,
Eastern time

- **Far From Alone**

Find loneliness resources as well as help with financial assistance, food, medical care and more.

farfromalone.com

- **211 Helpline Center**

Patients can get community information and referrals to social services for everyday needs and in times of crisis, including transportation challenges. Calls are free and confidential.

www.211.org

Dial **211** from any phone



To learn more about Humana's efforts to address transportation and other social determinants of health, visit PopulationHealth.Humana.com or connect at BoldGoal@humana.com.

References

1. American Hospital Association, "Transportation and the role of hospitals," <https://www.aha.org/system/files/hpoe/Reports-HPOE/2017/sdoh-transportation-role-of-hospitals.pdf>.
2. National Caregivers Library, Transportation and the Elderly, <http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/caregivers-resources/grp-transportation/transportation-and-the-elderly-article.aspx>.
3. J Community Health, 38(5): 976–993. Traveling Towards Disease: Transportation Barriers to Health Care Access, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4265215/>.
4. Senior-specific Social Needs Screener, 2019 West Health Institute, The Regents of the University of California.