

# 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 also are connected to higher medical costs for patients, delayed care and more emergency room visits.<sup>1</sup>

So what's the leading cause of patient no-shows? According to a 2017 study by the American Hospital Association, it's medical transportation. When your patients can't get a ride to their appointments, lab tests or the pharmacy, they often become non-adherent to treatment plans and medication.

## FOR SENIORS AND THOSE WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS, GETTING AROUND MATTERS



**Nearly 8.4M seniors** depend on others for their transportation<sup>2</sup>



**3.6M Americans** are unable to obtain medical care due to transportation barriers<sup>3</sup>



When older adults are asked about barriers to care, transportation is **the third most frequently** mentioned obstacle<sup>4</sup>

A lack of transportation can impact healthcare access, leading to poorer management of chronic illness—and thus, poorer health outcomes.<sup>5</sup> It can also exacerbate other social determinants of health,<sup>6</sup> such as accessing healthy foods, engaging socially 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:<sup>7</sup>

1.

In the last six months, has lack of transportation kept you from medical appointments?

**a. Yes   b. No**

2.

In the last six months, 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 your healthcare services, it can also create more opportunities to boost healthy activity and behaviors.

### YOU CAN ALSO REFER YOUR PATIENTS TO THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

#### Patients' medical insurance

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

#### 211 Helpline Center

Provides 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](http://www.211.org)

**Dial 211 from any phone**

#### Connect2Affect

Offers an online directory, created by AARP, to connect patients with transportation options, in-home services and more.

[connect2affect.org](http://connect2affect.org)

#### Eldercare and Area Agencies on Aging

Helps older patients and their caregivers find trustworthy, local support resources, including transportation options.

[www.eldercare.acl.gov](http://www.eldercare.acl.gov)

**1-800-677-1116 (TTY: 711),**

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

To learn more about Humana's efforts to address transportation and other social determinants of health, visit [PopulationHealth.Humana.com](http://PopulationHealth.Humana.com) or connect at [BoldGoal@humana.com](mailto:BoldGoal@humana.com).

<sup>1</sup>Health Research & Educational Trust. (2017, November). Social determinants of health series: Transportation and the role of hospitals. Chicago, IL: Health Research & Educational Trust. Accessed at [www.aha.org/transportation](http://www.aha.org/transportation)

<sup>2</sup>National Caregivers Library, Transportation and the Elderly, <http://www.caregiverslibrary.org/caregivers-resources/grp-transportation/transportation-and-the-elderly-article.aspx>

<sup>3</sup>American Hospital Association, <https://www.aha.org/ahahret-guides/2017-11-15-social-determinants-health-series-transportation-and-role-hospitals>

<sup>4</sup>Health Forward Foundation, Transportation barriers impact health care access, June 2019, <https://healthforward.org/transportation-barriers-impact-health-care-access/>

<sup>5</sup>J Community Health. 2013 Oct; 38(5): 976–993. Traveling Towards Disease: Transportation Barriers to Health Care Access, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4265215/>

<sup>6</sup>Xtelligent Healthcare Media, Overcoming Transportation Barriers to Drive Patient Care Access, November 2017, <https://patientengagementhit.com/news/overcoming-transportation-barriers-to-drive-patient-care-access>

<sup>7</sup>Senior-specific Social Needs Screener, 2019 West Health Institute, The Regents of the University of California