

HEALTHWATCH

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Stay connected to nurture your mental health



Sometime in March, you might have noticed a shift in the way people refer to distancing. What we called “social distancing” at the beginning of the pandemic became “physical distancing” for many, as we realized that there’s a real need for people to connect socially, even if that means – at least for a while – that it shouldn’t happen face to face.

Being isolated from other people can make our physical and mental health worse and can trigger anxiety and depression, but psychologist Jenni O’Donnell, PsyD, Clinical Program Director, Swedish Behavioral Health Services, says there are plenty of ways to fill the need to connect with friends and loved ones without putting ourselves or others at increased risk.

New ways to reach out and touch someone

To counteract the loss of comfort that comes from hugs and physical closeness, you can find other means to keep in touch. “A six-foot distance between us does not have to mean isolation,” Dr. O’Donnell says. “We’ve all had to shift our thinking a bit and learn new, creative ways to connect. The good news is, we humans do adapt.”

Safe ways to keep connections intact from home:

- Consider joining the video chat bandwagon – using platforms like Zoom, House Party, FaceTime and Skype – to accommodate your need to see a loved one’s face and catch up.
- If you’re already up and running on a video chat platform, have

some technical skills, and know someone who’d like to communicate via video chat but doesn’t know how, offer to conduct a remote session to help them get started. *(This has a two-for-one benefit. The sense of community and purpose you get by helping someone can help counter negative effects of stressful life events.)*

- If video conferencing is not available or isn’t of interest to you, don’t underestimate the comfort you can find in a good, old-fashioned phone conversation with someone whose presence you enjoy.
- Start a daily group chat check-in by phone or video with your closest friends and family for updates and encouragement.
- If it works for you, rely on your existing social media platforms to chat and share news. *(Be mindful though: If you’re seeing information that distresses you or you simply feel worse when you spend time on social media, limit your use to short, infrequent check-ins or take an indefinite break and find another way to connect.)*
- Reach out to other people who may be feeling lonely, particularly the elderly, as a way to feel more connected and create a sense of community.
- Contact local senior centers, home care facilities or hospitals to see if they have any “virtual volunteer” opportunities.

A phone call a day...

Dr. O’Donnell suggests scheduling a specific time in each day to speak to someone online or on the phone. This also brings the added benefit of incorporating structure into your

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SWEDISH IN THE NEWS

Moment of silence to honor George Floyd, John Crawford III and others who lost their lives to racism.



Doctors for Justice March



Supporting the Emergency Feeding Program



Supporting change for all, for a better world

At Swedish, we strive to hear, understand and support all who struggle to feel safe and equal. Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of **each person we serve** – all races, all genders, all sexual orientations – every person.

In this difficult time, when racial injustice pervades our community’s news and our emotional life, we recognize the need for radical, systemic change. We support and stand with Seattle’s Black and African American communities and will do our part to eradicate systemic racism. We hear and respect the demand for equity for people of color and we unequivocally believe that Black

Lives Matter. With this in mind, we are ramping up our partnerships with, and increasing support of, community organizations that elevate equity, safety and health outcomes for people of color.

- Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
- Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County
- Byrd Barr Place
- Healthy King County Coalition
- African American Health Board

Please take a moment to read our 2019 Community Benefit Report, which outlines our effort to address the most pressing health needs for all in our community. Find the report at www.swedish.org/about/overview/mission-outreach.



When's the last time you saw your doctor?

A look at the risks and benefits of medical visits during a pandemic



As the pandemic crisis ebbs and flows, and healthcare facilities have implemented a broad range of safety precautions, patients can feel safe about coming into Swedish to see their healthcare providers. Still, many people are not yet sure if the risk of visiting a clinic outweighs the need to go in.

"When someone tells me they're reluctant to come into the doctor's office, I understand," says family medicine physician Hans "Martin" Vatheuer, M.D., who practices at Swedish Snoqualmie Primary Care. "People don't know what to expect, and they don't want to risk exposure to COVID-19, so I think a lot of patients are taking a 'wait and see' approach. I want to be sure people who need care are getting it, one way or another."

Dr. Vatheuer says that three months ago, he was seeing almost everyone via video and seeing just a few select patients in the clinic. "Over the last month this has really reversed, and now we're seeing most people in-person. Sometimes we can even help patients via a telephone consultation if it's low-complexity."

Help with the decision

Dr. Vatheuer says his advice for most people who are reluctant to return to regular care: Call your doctor's office.

"We're here to help you figure out the next step, the safest way," he says. "It's our job to help you determine the risk versus benefit – you're not out there on a limb to wait it out yourself. Even if you are a first-time patient at our clinic, our great schedulers, nurses, medical assistants and providers are well equipped to talk you through the

decision and find a method of care that is most safe and appropriate, and also works for you."

Dr. Vatheuer says the decision will take several factors into account: your age, medical conditions, risk of waiting too long to tend to a problem, and your level of concern. "It's like a teeter-totter," he says. "At some point the risk of exposure to COVID-19 will be less than the risk of letting an existing medical condition escalate to become a bigger problem, and then an emergency."

Face-to-face visits

Dr. Vatheuer outlines three basic categories his team considers. Patients falling into one of these categories should consider a face-to-face visit:

- **People with symptoms** or problems that could be serious, such as chest pain, new headaches or infection
- **People with chronic medical problems**, especially if they are not well-controlled, such as diabetes, COPD or heart failure
- **People who need general preventive care** (*This category is further divided into older versus younger people, with younger people generally being at lower risk to come in, but older people also benefiting – especially if they are overdue for important preventive care such as cancer screening.*)

To help keep you safe in Swedish clinics, here's what we're doing:

- **Screening.** Every patient ahead of time—twice. Any hint of COVID-19 symptoms and that patient goes to another designated clinic.
- **Masking.** All clinic staff, providers and patients wear masks. All staff washes or gels hands constantly.
- **Distancing.** We're taking steps to ensure appropriate distance

by keeping a minimum of six feet between patients and staff.

- **Limiting time in waiting rooms.** In most clinics, patients are escorted past the waiting room area and directly to their exam room.
- **Visitor limitations.** We are limiting people coming into our facilities to those deemed essential.
- **Sanitizing.** We wipe down every room after every patient, every time. Ditto for the bathrooms. Hand sanitizer stations are located throughout the clinics.

The bottom line: Healthcare facilities are returning to normal capacity, Swedish and other health systems are taking great precautions to protect patients and caregivers from COVID-19 exposure, and people can feel safe getting needed care in their doctor's office and hospitals.

"There's always a way to be 'seen' by your provider," Dr. Vatheuer says. "When you delay preventive care, at some point the risk of missing something outweighs the risk of COVID-19. Whether we connect in person, by phone or by video chat, there are safe ways to take care of your health. More and more, now is the time to resume general care."

For more information about patient safety and getting care, visit [Swedish.org/safecare](https://www.swedish.org/safecare).



Hans "Martin" Vatheuer, M.D., is a Swedish family medicine physician who enjoys seeing patients of all ages, from one to 101. He believes in really listening to the patient, performing a thorough exam, and working

together to make a treatment plan that works for the patient. He focuses on prevention. He strives to consider the whole patient—body, mind, spirit, and relationships with others. Dr. Vatheuer practices at Swedish Snoqualmie Primary Care.

Stay connected to nurture your mental health (continued from page 1)

time, which is another way to cope if you find yourself with unfilled hours and you're missing routine.

Want to know more? Visit [blog.swedish.org](https://www.blog.swedish.org) for more articles on behavioral health topics.

Remember your most recent really good day? That's where YOUR key to self-care lies

Dr. O'Donnell has a shortcut for people trying to figure out how to best take care of themselves and restore their energy during this extremely difficult time in all our lives.

"To create your own self-care list, sit down and think about what you were doing on your last really good day. How did you spend your time? Who did you talk to? What did you eat? Did you exercise, meditate, go to church, read or write? What charges your batteries?"

Dr. O'Donnell says it's important to really take time to reflect on your values and think of the things and people you're connected to when you feel like your "best self." Then be proactive in creating space for more of those good things in your life.

Need help? We're here

Feeling overwhelmed? You're not alone. Dr. O'Donnell says that she doesn't know anyone – herself included – who isn't feeling the stress of the pandemic at some level. Don't hesitate to reach out to a mental health professional at Swedish Behavioral Health & Wellbeing or elsewhere, even if you schedule just one or two sessions.

You have to take care of yourself, so you can take care of the other important people in your life.



Jennifer O'Donnell, PsyD, is a clinical psychologist and clinical program director for Behavioral Health Integration at Swedish. Behavioral Health Integration is an effort to serve the ever-growing recognition that our physical health is not separate from our emotional/behavioral health. By treating behaviorally influenced conditions as a part of the medical team, LICSWs and psychologists help to reduce the stigma and barriers associated with seeking mental health support. Dr. O'Donnell hopes to see behavioral healthcare become a routine part of how we engage with healthcare, as well as ensuring that there is no wrong door to accessing the help that someone needs.

4 Ms for Mental Health

You can use the "4 Ms for Mental Health" exercise to get an idea what kind of self-care will work for you, and use what you discover as you plan your days – both during the pandemic and after the crisis passes.

1. Movement/mobility: Exercise is great for decreasing anxiety and depression and improving sleep. Set a goal to exercise every day for at least 15 minutes. The type of movement will be different for different people, and may vary for you from day to day. Bonus points if you can get some activity outside on a sunny day: It's nature's best mood booster!

2. Mindfulness: When we get anxious and worried, we're thinking of "what ifs" and projecting into the future. To ground yourself in the present, stop what you're doing and focus on your breath for five minutes. Mindfulness brings our attention back to the here and now and helps us shift our focus to things we can change, instead of things that are out of our control. (*If you're just starting a mindfulness practice, consider trying an online app like Headspace or Calm.*)

3. Mastery: You know how good it feels to start and finish something, so

you can check it off the list? You don't have to be a "master" of anything to create mastery. In this context, the idea is to find something you enjoy and can do safely while physical distancing – it could be cooking, writing, gardening, crossword puzzles, playing music, organizing your home, whatever you like! – and make a plan to do it. Finishing something – even if it's just a puzzle or a routine task – can help give you a sense of control and reduce feelings of helplessness or powerlessness.

4. Meaningful connections: People need people, and it's important to keep relationships going – especially in times of physical isolation. Don't wait for someone to contact you. Every day, be sure to connect with other humans on any level, whether that's a phone or text exchange, email conversations, a chat (from a proper distance) at the grocery store. If you do use video platforms, consider keeping the video on so you can see each other's faces. (*Bonus points for making it fun by scheduling a virtual coffee break, happy hour, book club meeting, or whatever format suits you best.*)

Consider going virtual for your next medical appointment

Dr. Sameer Gafoor shares his experience



When COVID-19 hit Seattle, healthcare providers had to act quickly to find safe ways to tend to their patients' health. In-person visits were limited significantly. Before COVID-19, telehealth (also known as virtual care) was already gradually earning its place as a convenient and effective care option. Suddenly, it took center stage.

"In my entire career as a physician, this has been the most transformational, largest, fastest change I've experienced in healthcare," says interventional cardiologist Sameer Gafoor, M.D., co-director of the Structural Heart and Valve Disease Program at Swedish. "Bringing telehealth into the mainstream so quickly is an excellent example of how our Swedish leaders, community, state and country came together in a time of crisis to work through obstacles to delivering care."

Dr. Gafoor says the unprecedented circumstances led to a level of acceptance and openness – on both the care provider and patient sides – that was conducive to change. He hopes this opportunity may inspire a permanent shift in the way medical care is delivered as we aim to offer "the right care option, at the right time, for every patient."

Why (and how) it works

"It sounds counterintuitive, but I feel that telehealth takes us back to

the way we practiced decades ago – the home visit. When I'm talking to a patient who's sitting at home, I get to see glimpses of their home and their life. That may be art or photos on the wall, their pets or the family members sitting beside that patient who weren't able to come in before to any other visit. On these visits I get to know my patient as a person and we connect in very human terms."

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Gafoor wears a mask during his in-person interaction with patients. So, he says, video communication actually feels more personal to him than some of his in-person, face-to-face visits.

He also appreciates that virtual visits allow a closer interaction with the patient's loved ones – often the adult children of patients, or an elderly partner who is not mobile enough to accompany the patient to an in-office appointment. "It's one thing to escort someone to their visit, but on a virtual visit they're sitting in the home listening and participating. It allows more time when more time is needed."

Are telehealth visits the future of medicine? Yes and no, Dr. Gafoor says. "Not every condition can be treated via telehealth and nothing will ever replace face-to-face, hands-on exams completely," he says. "But as long as the telehealth visit meets the needs on both sides, it is a valuable

complement. Going forward, given all the options, some people will prefer in-person visits, some will prefer virtual visits, and some will opt for a mixture of both."

The nuts and bolts

As a Swedish patient, it's easy, safe and secure* to talk to your primary or specialty healthcare provider from your home using video technology on your smart phone, tablet or computer.

- A telehealth visit allows you and your provider to connect via your electronic device or phone without going to a clinic or hospital for an appointment.
- During your consultation, your provider can talk to you about your health concerns, work on a care plan, and if needed, provide a prescription order while you remain safe in your home.
- A telehealth visit is the same co-pay cost as your standard visit.

Phone visits are also available as an option for some types of appointments.

***A note about security:** Swedish has a dedicated, secure portal for patient visits through a technology platform called Zoom. Enhanced security measures include encryption, meeting IDs and visit "verification" to ensure your telehealth visit is private and secure. Providers are assigned unique passwords and online "waiting rooms." This ensures that only your provider and you will be admitted to your visit. Our Information Security team regularly monitors Zoom for any security concerns that may arise.



Sameer Gafoor, M.D., is a Swedish interventional cardiologist and co-medical director of the Swedish Structural Heart and Valve Disease program. This new and growing field focuses on an innovative way to treat many complex heart and valve disease patients without open heart surgery. Dr. Gafoor's goal is to bring patients the best in worldwide care right at their doorsteps. Patients are important to Dr. Gafoor – not just for who they are and what they've done, but also for what they plan to do today, tomorrow and for the future after that. Dr. Gafoor practices at Swedish Heart & Vascular – Cherry Hill.



SWEDISH SURGERY IS WELCOMING PATIENTS

Here's how we're keeping you safe

Swedish has always been committed to our patients' and caregivers' safety, especially during a surgery or procedure. To minimize your exposure to COVID-19, we have implemented safety protocols that cover all aspects of your stay with us. Among the precautions:

- **Patient testing and screening:** We are testing all elective surgical/procedural patients for COVID-19 prior to their surgery/procedure. If a patient tests positive or has symptoms, we reschedule their surgery.
- **Patient isolation:** If a patient has symptoms or tests positive, we isolate them safely from other patients.
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** Our facilities have adopted policies that align with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including requiring care providers wear surgical masks.
- **Facility protection:** Every person entering our facilities is screened at the door for fever, a major symptom of COVID-19. All visitors are given masks.
- **Facility sanitizer and cleaning:** We have installed hand sanitizer stations for patient use in every area of the hospital. We have also increased facility cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
- **Distancing:** We do not allow non-essential personnel in the facility to decrease the likelihood of exposure.

In addition, a task force of Swedish physician leaders, chief executives and infection prevention specialists meets regularly to examine all safety and infection prevention strategies. Also, a clinical focus group reviews safety procedures during the perioperative period, from admission through recovery.

To learn about the safety precautions we're taking in our outpatient clinics, read "When's the last time you saw your doctor?" on page 2.

We're open, and you have options

Even without COVID-19 in the picture, it's not always easy to decide when – or where – to get care. Keep this guide handy for the next time you or a family member need some medical intervention.



Is your condition potentially life threatening? Call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

- Difficulty breathing
- Heart attack or chest pain
- Head trauma and seizures
- Stroke symptoms
- Severe bleeding
- Losing consciousness
- Fever in a child less than age two months (100.4 or higher)

Do you need same-day care for a minor medical emergency? Make an urgent care appointment with an ARNP.

- Sprains and minor cuts

DO YOU HAVE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS?

Get tested at a dedicated Acute Respiratory Clinic

Swedish has dedicated Acute Respiratory Clinics available to see patients with moderate-to-severe respiratory symptoms for evaluation and testing. Please call your primary care provider to schedule a referral appointment.

If you are experiencing symptoms such as a fever and respiratory illness

- Headaches and migraines
- Fever, cough, cold or flu
- Burns and dehydration
- Minor fractures
- Animal or insect bites
- Vomiting or persistent diarrhea

and are in need of additional screening, please call ahead to a location at the website listed below to schedule an appointment. If you're not sure you require a test, complete our virtual assessment tool. Please note: These locations do not accept walk-ins.

Go to [swedish.org](https://www.swedish.org) to learn more.

Need evaluation for a condition that isn't an emergency? Schedule an in-person or virtual appointment with your primary care provider.

Trying to do it all, and do it all well?

Now's the time to re-prioritize

Remember the days before the pandemic, when so many people said they were struggling to balance work, kids or other family obligations, household maintenance, and all of life's other moving pieces?

Finding balance was hard enough then, but COVID-19, the surfacing news of continued racial injustices and spiraling political unrest brought a whole new set of emotional and practical challenges. If you're like most people, you've had to set new expectations about what your life looks like and make continuous choices about how you want to use your limited time and energy. You might feel like you're coming up short.

Fortunately, with a little coaching and support, and a few new tools in our mental health toolbox, it's possible to find a new sort of balance and pleasure in life – even in times of uncertainty.

Don't expect your best performance

Psychologist Hayley Quinn, PsyD, behavioral health consultant at Swedish Medical Group, says she finds that nearly everyone is experiencing some kind of distress right now. "Parents are overwhelmed, now more than ever. Many older and single people are feeling socially isolated.



Basically, any concern a person had before the pandemic is now highlighted and brought to the surface. COVID-19 brought out and intensified what was there before," she says.

Dr. Quinn urges her patients to give themselves some grace and understand that it's not realistic to think they can fit their regular lifestyle into this new "box" we're in.

"A lot of people – especially working parents – are troubled because they're used to having a rhythm to each day," she says. "They're now being full-time everything: worker, parent, partner, home-school teacher, cook, housekeeper. It's overwhelming, and it's not realistic to expect your best performance in all the areas."

Prioritize what feels best

Dr. Quinn, a parent herself, says the key to finding balance during tough times is to prioritize and give yourself permission to let some things slide. "Once you accept that you're not going to be able to be your 'best self' right now, decide what you are going to be," Dr. Quinn says. "This requires a shift in identity. What kind of parent do you want to be, right now? What kind of worker? What responsibilities can you let go for now?"

She shares her own approach: "I take a walk with the kids in the morning every day, and then we have breakfast. I know other points in the day won't be certain, once work starts up, but this gives our family a small routine to count on and some structure. A fully structured day, every day, just isn't possible right now."

This works in other roles too – at work, with your partner, with household duties. "Find and focus on what makes you feel the best about that role. Try to keep those top priorities, and let the rest go."

Interested in getting in touch with Swedish Behavioral Health? Contact your regular Swedish healthcare provider.



Psychologist Hayley Quinn, PsyD, is a behavioral health consultant at Swedish Medical Group in Seattle and assistant professor at Washington State University School of Medicine. She has specialized training in pediatric primary care. Dr. Quinn's professional interests include parent management, nutrition, sleep and child development. Dr. Quinn is passionate about educating the local community on behavioral health topics through TV news interviews, podcasts and social media platforms.

CenteringPregnancy®: A New Approach to Prenatal Care



Swedish offers a unique approach to prenatal care through CenteringPregnancy®. CenteringPregnancy® brings expecting mothers and dads/partners with low-risk pregnancies together for group sessions on all aspects of prenatal care. Led by a certified nurse-midwife, soon-to-be parents find companionship, build community, and support each other as they

discuss common pregnancy concerns and plan for their new babies.

About the Sessions

While traditional childbirth education classes don't start until about two months before the baby's due date, CenteringPregnancy® sessions, composed of about eight to 12 families, start early in the pregnancy. The 90-minute meetings are initially held every four weeks and increase to

every two weeks as the pregnancy progresses. Expecting mothers and dads/partners receive 10 times the additional time with a midwife in CenteringPregnancy® program than with traditional appointments. Women learn how to record their own vitals (weight and blood pressure); and at each session they discuss and learn about important subjects such as nutrition and exercise, coping with labor, breast-feeding and infant care.

Benefits of Group Care

The CenteringPregnancy® program is a proven model of effective care. Studies show that group prenatal care reduces premature births, increases breast-feeding and enhances psychosocial outcomes. This can be attributed to the combination of education, support and knowledge that participants gain in a group atmosphere.

There is no cost beyond that of regular prenatal care, and it is covered by insurance in the same way as other prenatal care.

For more information on CenteringPregnancy®, call 206-781-6080 for Ballard and 425-313-4141 for Issaquah or visit www.swedish.org/services/centeringpregnancy.



SWEDISH HEALTHWATCH

HealthWatch is meant to provide useful healthcare information and is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor. If you have a question concerning your health, contact your physician. If you do not have one and want a free referral, call **1-800-SWEDISH (1-800-793-3474)** or visit our website at www.swedish.org.

Contact Information

Swedish Campus Locations

Swedish Ballard	206-782-2700
Swedish Cherry Hill (Seattle)	206-320-2000
Swedish Edmonds	425-640-4000
Swedish First Hill (Seattle)	206-386-6000
Swedish Issaquah	425-313-4000
Swedish Mill Creek	425-357-3900
Swedish Redmond	206-320-5190

For addresses, visit www.swedish.org/locations

Swedish Primary Care

Bainbridge Clinic	206-991-2121
Ballard Clinic	206-320-3335
Ballard Family Medicine	206-297-5100
Bellevue Clinic	425-462-1132
Central Seattle Clinic	206-320-4888
Cherry Hill Family Medicine	206-320-2484
Downtown Seattle Clinic	206-320-3351
Edmonds Birth & Family Clinic	425-640-4950
Edmonds Clinic	425-640-4900
Edmonds Internal Medicine	425-640-4900
Edmonds Pediatrics	425-673-3456
Factoria Clinic	425-641-4000
First Hill Clinic	206-386-9505
Greenlake Clinic	206-320-3400
Issaquah Clinic	425-394-0700
Klahanie Clinic	425-394-0620
Magnolia Clinic	206-320-3364
Meadow Creek (Issaquah) Pediatrics	425-394-1680
Mercer Island Clinic	206-275-5060
Mill Creek Clinic	425-357-3700
Pine Lake Clinic	425-455-2845
Queen Anne Clinic	206-861-8500
Redmond Clinic	206-320-5190
Redmond Pediatrics	425-881-5437
Renton Clinic	425-391-5700
Richmond Beach Clinic	206-533-2900
Sand Point Clinic	206-320-8050
Snoqualmie Clinic	425-888-2016
South Lake Union Clinic	206-320-5200
West Seattle Clinic	206-320-3399
West Seattle Pediatrics	206-320-5780

For addresses, visit www.swedish.org/primarycare

General Information

Class Registration and Community Health Education	206-386-2502
Cancer Education Center (Swedish Cancer Institute)	206-386-3200
Media Inquiries	206-998-5028

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