Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, pediatric primary care practices are facing unprecedented cancellations by patients who have scheduled well-child visits and/or vaccinations. These cancellations can be detrimental to patient well-being and to the viability of primary care practices. As schools and other children’s learning and leisure time settings prepare for re-opening, providers should anticipate and prepare for a rapid increase in the demand for well-child services.

On May 8th, 2020, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) revised its initial recommendations for delivering well-care during COVID-19 such that:

- All well-child care should occur in person whenever possible and within the child's medical home where continuity of care may be established and maintained.
- Practices who have successfully implemented telehealth (audio and visual) to provide appropriate elements of the well-child exam, should continue with telehealth, followed by a timely in-person visit.
- Providers may initiate well-child visits through telehealth, recognizing that some elements of the well exam should be completed in-person. These elements include, at a minimum:
  - comprehensive physical exam;
  - office testing, including:
    - laboratory testing;
    - hearing, vision, and oral health screening; fluoride varnish; and
    - immunizations.

Well-child care should be consistent with Bright Futures/AAP Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care (Periodicity Schedule).

The following checklist will walk you through special considerations for your practice during COVID-19 pandemic.

**PREPARE THE OFFICE SETTING**

- Arrange waiting area with chairs at least 6 feet apart
- Mark check-in line to enable 6 feet distance between patients checking in
- Prepare one ultra-clean room for vaccine administration only
- Offer curbside or drive-through vaccinations (prepare back-up for inclement weather)
- Dedicate Saturdays (or other day of the week) for vaccination catch-up only
- Schedule well visits in the morning (newborns first) and sick visits in the afternoon
- Ensure adequate supply of PPE for patients, families, staff, and clinicians
- Provide check-in area/staff with plexiglass
- Maintain easy access to hand sanitizer at front entrance and other high-traffic areas
- Request co-pays/co-insurance using credit/debit cards rather than cash
- Consider using the increasingly common practice of having patients call into the office when they arrive, wait in the car for their appointment time, and receive a call when the room is ready. Take the patient immediately to the exam room, without utilizing the waiting room at all. This, of course, requires the parent has a cell phone.

**IDENTIFY PATIENTS NEEDING CATCH-UP WELL-VISITS AND VACCINES**

Query your EHR for your patients who are:

- More than one month behind in vaccination(s) (per 2020 ACIP immunization schedule) [cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/recommendations.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/acip/recommendations.html)
- Behind in well-child visits, per Recommendations for Preventive Pediatric Health Care [downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity_schedule.pdf](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/periodicity_schedule.pdf)
If community circumstances require limiting in-person visits, AAP urges providers to:

- Prioritize in-person newborn care, newborn well visits and immunization of infants and young children through 24 months of age whenever possible.
- Continue well visits for children through telehealth, with the acknowledgement that some elements of the well exam will occur in clinic once community circumstances allow.
- Complete in-person elements when circumstances permit. These elements include, at a minimum, the comprehensive physical exam; office testing, including laboratory testing; hearing, vision, and oral health screening; fluoride varnish; and immunizations.
- Conduct acute or chronic care via telehealth and complete some elements of the acute or chronic care visit in clinic as indicated and when circumstances permit.

If a family is reluctant to come to an in-office well-child visit and needs vaccination, a combined telehealth visit and drive-through vaccination is an acceptable solution.

According to the AAP, all components of the well-child check should occur in-person for patients who are 24 months of age or younger.

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**SCHEDULE THE WELL-CHILD VISIT**

- In-person only or
- Hybrid
  - Telehealth for some elements
  - Followed by in-person for the remaining elements

If a family is reluctant to come to an in-office well-child visit and needs vaccination, combining a telehealth visit and drive through vaccination is an acceptable solution.

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**WELL-CHILD ELEMENTS & SUITABILITY FOR TELEHEALTH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bright Futures Element (refer to periodicity schedule)</th>
<th>Suitable for Telehealth?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipatory guidance</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurements (e.g. heights, weight, BP)</td>
<td>Contingent upon home equipment &amp; provider/patient preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental/behavioral health screenings and assessments</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral health screen/flouride varnish</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing and vision (sensory screening)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Exam</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer vaccinations</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests: Anemia, lead, tuberculosis, dyslipidemia, STD, HIV, cervical dysplasia</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Lactation assistance is also suitable for telehealth.

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**TIPS FOR CONTINUING PRACTICE FLOW DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

- Consider allowing sibling well-child visits (parents may prefer going to the office once instead of twice as it is more aligned with guidance on social distancing).
- Implement a consistent schedule for telehealth visits and for in-person visits to enable smooth patient flow.
- Allow extra time during the patient’s first telehealth visit for visit “check-in,” start-up, and orientation to telehealth technology.
- Telehealth visits typically end when patient-provider communication ends. For this reason, it is important for a practice to have a process for prompt patient contact to schedule next appointment.
- Ensure the patient knows their next steps if the provider ordered any labs or screening/diagnostic tests, and to collect feedback on the telehealth experience.
- While the Federal Government has relaxed some of its HIPAA requirements for telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic, providers should aim toward a sustainable telehealth solution that is fully HIPAA compliant.
- ZOOM is a preferred method for American Sign Language (re: bigger screen).
- If your EHR has bi-directional data sharing with the NC Vaccine registry, query the registry for your patients’ vaccination status.
- Engage with NC HealthConnex. It can help providers working either in the office or remotely in the following ways:
  - Provides access to secure, web-based patient’s longitudinal record across healthcare settings.
  - Enables practices to view patient history, hospital and ER admissions/discharges, vaccinations, and lab test results (especially as they relate to COVID-19 and other respiratory or influenza diagnosis codes) as they become available via participant EHRs.
  - Enables direct (electronic) messaging between providers.
  - NC HealthConnex information is available at: [nlhec.nc.gov/providers/how-connect](nlhec.nc.gov/providers/how-connect)

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Stanford video for providers on “presence” during telehealth visits: [youtube.com/watch?v=DBljEo1xQ0I](youtube.com/watch?v=DBljEo1xQ0I)