

## **Health resources aid in safer return to work**

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As communities across Ohio begin the process of planning for the reopening of local economies, many may be returning to work and engaging in more regular social activity. While the return to some semblance of normalcy may come as a relief, questions about one's own health or the health of family members may remain.

Upon returning to work, people should continue to be smart and cautious while interacting with others. Following CDC guidelines and maintaining social distancing, practicing good hand hygiene and frequently sanitizing common areas or high-contact items, including doorknobs, hand railings and communal phones and printers, can be good preventive measures to help mitigate COVID-19 health risks.

Business associations, health systems, and governments are crafting guidelines to help mitigate risks associated with reopening communities, but additional resources may be available to help individuals navigate their own physical and mental health during this transition period.

Many may continue to have questions related to potential COVID-19 symptoms. To help, UnitedHealthcare provides an online [COVID-19 symptom self-checker](#) to help people gauge their symptoms and consider what may be the next steps for care. The symptom self-checker is at no additional cost for people to access, and users of the self-checker tool will be asked to answer a series of questions to generate feedback on care options to consider, which then assigns assessment levels ranging from self-isolation to emergency care, depending on the severity and urgency of the symptoms recorded. A testing site locator feature provides updated information on nearby COVID-19 testing sites if recommended by a physician.

Some people may still need to see a doctor but may worry about the potential risk of exposure (or the risk of exposing others) with in-person visits to a physician's office or urgent care center. As an alternative starting point for care, some people may continue to consider telehealth, which enables people to connect 24/7 with a health care provider via a smart phone, tablet or desktop computer. Telehealth may be especially helpful as an initial option for medical advice related to COVID-19, and to help evaluate other possible health issues, such as allergies, pink eye or the flu.

Employers also have a tool available for their employees. [ProtectWell](#), a new smartphone app launched earlier this year by Microsoft and UnitedHealth Group, screens employees for COVID-19. Employees found to be at-risk for COVID-19 are directed to get a test and the app notifies employers of the results. The ProtectWell app is offered to all employers in the United States at no charge.

Access to mental health resources may also continue to be an important tool for people to have as they head back to work. Being at home and perhaps feeling isolated over the last few months

may have had an impact on one's mental health, and the loneliness people may be experiencing, as well as possible stress or anxiety brought on by the pandemic, should be considered alongside physical health.

Virtual mental health resources are available for those experiencing increased stress and anxiety. A free emotional support line (866-342-6892) is available 24/7 to the public courtesy of Optum, which is part of UnitedHealth Group. Staffed by mental health professionals, individuals may receive help without taking any unnecessary trips.

Available at no additional cost, mental health and wellness apps, like [Sanvello](#), may also be great resources for coping with the ongoing stress and anxiety. Equipped with self-care tools, peer support groups, coaching and therapy, Sanvello offers a number of avenues to receive the help and support one may need as they return to work.

For people who used mental health services before COVID-19, some care providers offer long-distance counseling and other resources, enabling for continued care from the comfort of home. Check with your providers regarding options on what may work best for you.

Taking care of physical and mental health needs may be imperative in the coming weeks and months as communities strive to reopen and individuals resume more familiar living routines. Using online and telehealth services may play a role in facilitating a smoother and healthier transition.