

Dear Wayland Pediatric Families!

We hope you all are settling into new routines and staying healthy! This prolonged time of isolation, minimal structure and financial concerns in so many families is leading to new levels of stress and anxiety. We are here to support you in every way we can whether providing direct care, mental health support and helping to connect families to resources.

We would like to update the Wayland Pediatrics community in regards to our current office policies and practices. These have changed dramatically in the past weeks and have been developed in conjunction with the PPOC, DPH, and other local pediatric practices.

Our goal is to see as many patients via telehealth as possible while simultaneously keeping our offices open for visits that are appropriate for in-office visits. Telehealth enables patients to get care while also minimizing unnecessary illness exposure for you (and for us)! If we do need to physically assess a patient with possible COVID19 symptoms, we will do so in the safety of your car.

What visits should still be seen in the office?

Newborn visits and routine check-ups for babies (2 month – 3 years olds) are important in order to get critical immunizations administered. We are also encouraging healthy school age children, teenagers and college students to take advantage of their flexible schedule. We have altered the office schedule to protect against the spread of illness. We are seeing well visits in the morning, thoroughly disinfecting rooms between visits and limiting time in the waiting room. Those patients and care givers with symptoms which could represent a COVID19 infection are asked not to come into the office. We encourage you to keep up routine care while we are able to provide it.

We will see patients with injuries and select illness visits in which there is no fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, chest pain, or difficulty breathing.

What visits should NOT be seen in the office?

Routine med checks and other behavioral health visits should be completed via telehealth.

According to the most recent DPH guidelines, **patients should NOT come into the office if they have had direct contact with a confirmed COVID case or if they have ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS - fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, difficulty breathing. THESE SYMPTOMS SHOULD BE REPORTED TO US AND SEEN ONLY VIA A TELEHEALTH VISIT.**

As you may have read, the medical community is GREATLY AT RISK due to the lack of available Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Our office is not exempt from this dilemma as we lack the necessary amount of PPE required to manage a drawn out epidemic. In light of this and in order to preserve a supply of gowns/masks/goggles/etc. . . the DPH is requiring that mildly and moderately ill patients must stay home and complete any medical visits via telehealth.

We are anticipating a tidal wave of very sick patients who may need to be seen in the coming weeks and we need to ensure an adequate supply of PPE. PLEASE adhere to the DPH guidelines above regarding office visits. Thank you.

What visits should be seen via Telehealth?

As many as possible!

This includes all med checks, and the vast majority of sick visits. In addition, all behavioral health visits should be completed remotely.

We are pleased to announce that behavioral health services are now available virtually via MyChart and Zoom. Our Behavioral Health Provider, Katie Warner, LICSW, is available Tuesdays-Thursdays to provide remote support during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Katie can provide consultation and support with:

- New or worsening symptoms of anxiety and/or depression
- Promoting and adjusting to new routines and roles at home
- Other parenting support and guidance (i.e. children exhibiting new behavioral challenges, sleep disturbance, skill regression, etc.)

Katie may recommend a parent meeting or phone call first to determine appropriateness of virtual visits.

Please contact our front desk at 508-358-2918 to learn more.

What do you need to do to prepare for a Telehealth visit? We will be sending out an e-mail shortly with all the information about this (provided we have an email for you). Briefly,

you (or your child if age 13 or older) need to be registered on MyChart and you need to download the Zoom app. If you would like to set up MyChart, please send a request to the office email: WeCare@WaylandPediatrics.com.

A few words about billing: In an attempt to allow medical offices to maintain income and therefore stay open to care for their patients, the Governor has mandated that all insurance companies cover telehealth services effective immediately. **According to this edict, any service related to COVID-19 (ie: any fever, cough, sore throat, body ache, difficulty breathing, etc. . .) will have no co-pay or cost to the patient.** In addition, routine check ups are to be billed as if they were in person (which, according to the Affordable Care Act, have no co-pay).

As part of this change in practice, the Governor has stated that telephone calls with providers may also be submitted for billing. While these billing codes have been in place for many years, insurance companies have, by and large, refused to reimburse them. In the current COVID-19 Pandemic, however, these are now being encouraged.

As a result, we will be having our providers make up for some of the significant decreased number of in-office visits by handling more of the telephone calls. *Services that we historically have provided over the phone without billing for them, may now be submitted to your insurance company (including conjunctivitis, croup, swimmer's ear, home rapid strep tests, and others).* Based on our (and other's) interpretation of the mandate, we do not expect any of this to result in increased costs to you.

We expect that these changes will last as long as the pandemic persists which, if we successfully "flatten the curve" this could result in less overall mortality, but a prolonged need to preserve social distancing practices. This could persist into the summer months.

Help us help you!

We ask that you please help support us during this time. The best thing you can do to help us stay open is to make a telehealth appointment today! If you are overdue for physical exam or have had an issue you've wanted to discuss, please call the office to set up an appointment!