



TEAMSTERS TRUST BENEFITS INSIDER



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When Virtual Visits Are Your Best Choice

Get the care you need, without an office visit

Connecting via our phones and computers is just a regular part of our lives. We keep up with friends online, check our bank accounts, schedule appointments, track our exercise or food, and so much more. Recently, technology has become an even bigger part of how we stay in touch and manage our lives—including how we get medical care.

Gone are the days of always needing to go into the doctor's office, or not being able to get seen outside business hours. Now with so many virtual care options available, getting quality care is easier than ever. There will continue to be times when your doctor will want to see you in person, but here are just a few instances where a virtual visit might be your best choice:

When you're feeling sick

When you or a family member is sick and feeling terrible, leaving the house is often the last thing you want to do. A virtual care visit with a doctor can help determine what illness you might have, any medications needed, and if an in-person visit or any tests are needed. Getting care virtually can save you a trip, get you the answers and care you need, and keep you from exposing anyone else.

For medication refills and questions

Anyone who takes medication regularly, or is starting a new medication, knows that sometimes questions come up about side effects, dosage, or reactions to other medications or vitamins. Virtual care is the perfect option for getting information and ordering any new prescriptions and refills you may need.

If you live in a rural area

If you live far away from a city center, you likely know that it can be sometimes difficult or time consuming to visit a doctor. Virtual care provides greater access to quality care, specialists, mental health services and more.

Seeing a specialist

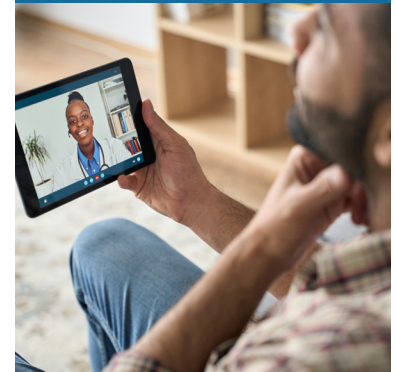
Specialty providers can sometimes be difficult to get in to see as they are in high demand. A virtual visit may make it possible to meet with them sooner. Over virtual care you could see a dermatologist about a rash or concern, discuss symptoms with an allergist, get test results from a cardiologist, or meet with a physical therapist.

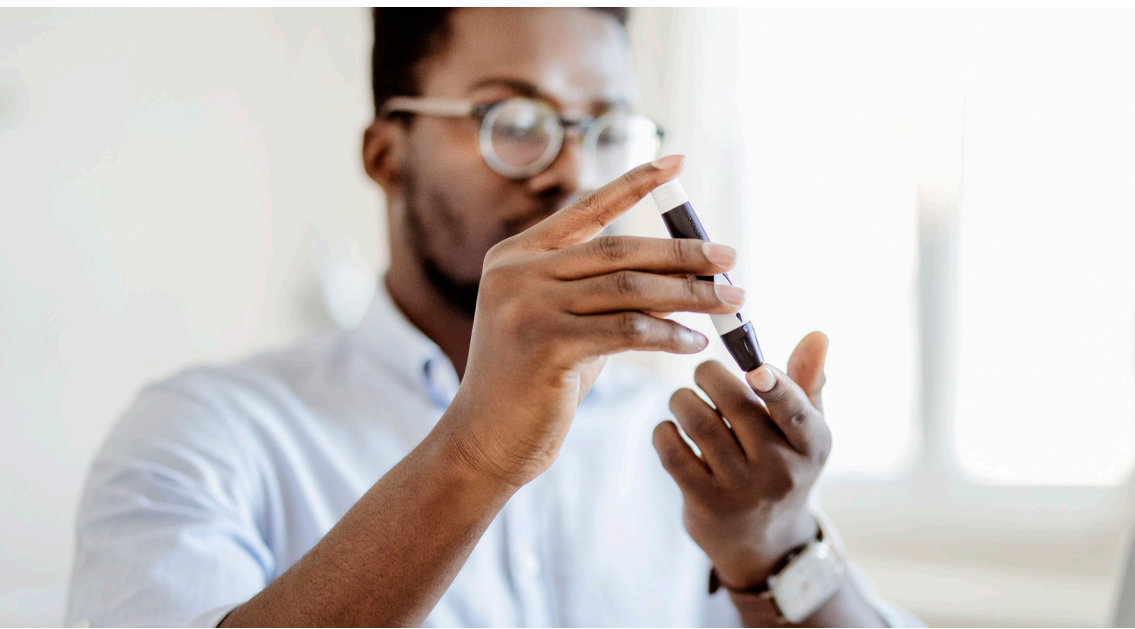
Mental health care

Virtual care gives you access to more mental health providers across the state. The majority of mental health professionals offer visits over the phone or telehealth, and report that virtual visits are just as effective as in person appointments.

DID YOU KNOW?

Common urgent care issues like colds, coughs, stomachaches and earaches, urinary tract infections and skin conditions can often be treated by virtual care, so you can skip that doctor's office wait. Learn more at wateamsters.com/benefits/virtual-care.





Get Help Managing Chronic Conditions

Support services for ongoing or complex medical conditions

If you have an ongoing health condition, also known as a chronic condition, it's likely something you manage on a daily basis. Conditions like diabetes, asthma, and heart disease can be challenging, and if not well maintained they can impact your quality of life. One of the keys to successfully managing any chronic condition is to have a good support team in place—people who can keep you motivated and help you follow the treatment plan established by your providers.

To help participants build a strong support team, the Trust offers two options for personalized care management services: Accolade and Premera Personal Health Support. Both programs are offered at no cost to you and are completely confidential. You'll be connected to trained and certified professionals who will work closely with you, your health plan, your doctor, and other members of your health care team.



Accolade Health Assistant

When facing a medical condition, make Accolade your first call. An Accolade Health Assistant can help you understand your benefits, know what resources are available to you, and connect you to wellness programs to support you in making lifestyle changes.

Accolade Health Assistants can answer all types of medical, healthcare and benefits questions. They will help you locate high-quality in-network providers close to home, assist you with claims and billing questions, and connect you to a team of nurses and clinical staff to support your medical needs.

Learn more and get started at wateamsters.com/benefits/accolade-health-assistant.



Personal Health Support

Personal Health Support from Premera helps participants manage complex medical conditions, recent surgeries, or hospital admissions. A Personal Health Support clinician will help coordinate care services, support you in following prescribed treatment plans, and connect you to resources and wellness programs available to you and your family.

To find out more, visit: wateamsters.com/benefits/medical.

TAKE ACTION

Managing an ongoing condition can be stressful.

GuidanceResources® connects you to a network of health professionals that can help with a wide variety of topics, such as: anxiety, grief, and depression; relationship issues; debt concerns, and more. Services are confidential and covered by the Trust. Visit guidanceresources.com and register with Web ID: WATEAMSTERS.





Speak Up!

And other tips on how to better participate in your own care

Taking good care of yourself isn't just about taking your vitamins and getting an annual checkup. There are many more things you can do to better participate in your own care—when meeting with your doctor, and on your own.



Advocate for yourself—Speak up and let your care team know what is going on with you, and what will and will not work for you. Often, we keep things to ourselves. Maybe we feel embarrassed, or we hesitate to disagree with our doctor. Your medical team can't help you with things they don't know about, and they want to help you find treatment plans that not only work, but work for you.



Ask questions—Part of advocating for yourself is to ask questions. If you are unsure of something, you can ask your doctor, call an Accolade Health Assistant or the Nurseline. During your appointment you can ask questions like: Do I really need this test or procedure? What are the downsides? Are there other options? Can you explain that again? What lifestyle changes can I make that might help?



Take notes—When you're in the exam room with your doctor, you may not have a lot of time to get important information. Your doctor can do a great job of explaining what you should do next. But when you get home, it can be hard to remember everything you were told. Taking notes can help you understand and follow your treatment plan once you leave the doctor's office. You can bring paper and a pen, type or use voice notes on your phone, or bring a friend or relative to take notes for you.



Build healthy habits—Even if you aren't struggling with an illness or consulting regularly with a doctor, it's important to prioritize your personal health care. Maintaining an active and healthy lifestyle is critical to your long-term health. You can build healthy habits by taking 20 minutes to move every day, cooking or pre-making balanced meals, prioritize sleep, and drinking plenty of water.



Take time for you—Stress has a surprising and negative impact on our overall well-being. It can affect our sleep, our body's natural recovery, make us feel sick and keep us feeling exhausted and run down. Rather than overwhelming yourself with the idea of always having to be productive or needing to "get things done", embrace taking some time for yourself. Do something you enjoy, engage with others, and simply take breaks when you need one—after all it's for your health!



For more information on how you can take a bigger role in your healthcare, visit: www.ownyourhealthwa.org.



Treating Lower Back Pain

Ways to treat lower back pain that might surprise you

Back pain is one of the most common physical ailments and nearly everyone will experience lower back pain at some point. Whether it is a nagging ache or debilitating pain, lower back pain can be stressful and put the brakes on our lives—keeping us from our jobs and from participating with family and friends. The good news is that there are a lot of options for treating lower back pain that can give you relief and keep you from needing expensive tests or surgeries.

First Things First

Be sure to talk to your doctor. Regardless of the intensity of your pain, you may want to let your doctor know what is going on. They can advise you if you might need to come in, prescribe medication if needed, or write you a referral. Keeping your doctor advised as you experience pain helps create a record which can be useful to your doctor in deciding on future care if needed.

If you've been in an accident, had an old injury flare up, or if your back pain is sudden and severe, or it has lasted more than three months (even if it comes and goes), be sure to seek care immediately.

Home Remedies

While we may want a quick fix, back pain typically can take some time to clear up. Before ordering imaging, like an MRI, or prescribing medications, your doctor might want you to try a few home remedies first. For most people their back pain will resolve given a little time and effort.

Here are a few recommended treatments you can do on your own:

- **Treat the pain.** Using hot or cold packs and over-the-counter pain medications like Advil or Tylenol won't cure the problem, but they can help make the pain more tolerable and help with muscle aches and stiffness. Medicated creams and patches that contain ingredients such as menthol, camphor, or lidocaine can cool, heat, or numb the affected area, offering temporary relief.
- **Keep moving.** While it may be tempting to stay in bed, doing so can make the pain worse over time, reduce flexibility, and weaken muscle tone. Going for walks may seem counterintuitive, but it is one of the best things you can do for back pain.
- **Strengthening your core.** Strong muscles, especially in your abdominal core, help support your back. You can strengthen your core and the muscles around your hips with simple at-home exercises, or by taking a Tai Chi, Pilates or yoga class.
- **Manage your stress.** Surprisingly, back pain can be caused and exacerbated not just by physical ailments, but also by emotional ones. Depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other forms of emotional stress can impact how our brain perceives pain. Finding ways to manage stress—by keeping moving, taking a yoga class, or talking to a mental health professional—could help you manage your lower back pain as well.



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Medical Options

Your primary care doctor is always your best first call, but there are many other medical professionals who may be able to help. Talk to your doctor about what they recommend, and for any referrals you may need.

Here are several alternative types of treatment to try:

- **Physical Therapy.** Physical therapy (PT) is often prescribed for low back pain and can help you safely work past pain and teach you exercises to improve your mobility, flexibility, and strengthen your core. PT is also often available now over telehealth, giving you more options for who to work with and when to meet.
- **Massage Therapy.** Massage has been proven to aid in relieving back pain. It can help loosen up muscles, increase circulation and blood flow (which reduces inflammation) and improve your range of motion.
- **Acupuncture.** Acupuncture is a traditional therapy based on the idea of energetics in the body and uses needles to stimulate specific nerves and areas of the body. The needles are not meant to be painful, and research on chronic lower back pain shows that acupuncture helps relieve muscle and nerve tension, and increases blood flow.
- **Chiropractic Adjustments.** Using manual therapies, chiropractic professionals focus on spinal manipulation (adjusting the spine and surrounding structures), and mobilization (stretching the joints and muscles) to increase range of motion. Chiropractic adjustments are a commonly prescribed treatment for back pain.

DID YOU KNOW?

As of Jan. 1, 2022, your benefits allow for **up to 20 medically necessary visits** to many types of in-network alternative practitioners—like massage, acupuncture, chiropractic and more. Call an **Accolade Health Assistant** to find out what's available on your plan: **(866) 206-0977**, Monday through Friday 5am-5pm.



Most lower back pain will resolve in time with home remedies, but always talk to your doctor about what might be best for you. Lower back pain can be tough, but with so many treatment options and specialists there are many steps you can take to get relief.



Teladoc® Virtual Care

With **Teladoc®** all PPO plan participants and their eligible family members have access to secure, on-demand, around-the-clock care. You'll talk to a board-certified physician over the phone or video chat, and they can help diagnose and resolve many common medical issues, prescribe any needed medications, and advise you on next steps. This service is covered in full by the Trust.

Request a telephone or video consultation by visiting **teladoc.com/premera** and setting up or logging into your account, or by calling **(855) 332-4059**.



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THE TAKEAWAY

Healthy Snack Ideas

Eating healthy doesn't have to be boring

Packing a healthy snack doesn't necessarily mean using a long list of ingredients to create something elaborate, or only being able to eat "rabbit food." There are many easy and yummy options to improve your diet while benefiting your health.

Try packing these for your next workday:

- Apple slices with almond or peanut butter
- Protein-packed bars
- Plain or Greek yogurt with berries or honey
- Hard-boiled eggs and few whole grain crackers
- Carrots or celery with hummus or black bean dip
- Nuts and dried fruit
- Cucumber slices and guacamole
- Roasted chickpeas
- String cheese and some fruit

Instead of relying on fast food or vending machines, these simple healthy snacks will keep you energized throughout the day and save you some money too!

