

# Some Cancer Care Shifts to the Home to Reduce Coronavirus Risks

Staying home for chemotherapy infusions and other treatments can save time and reduce anxiety surrounding contracting the virus.

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In the face of the coronavirus pandemic, health care providers are having to make major changes in how they provide cancer treatment, including shifting some care to patients' homes, the Philadelphia Inquirer reports.

Research indicates that those at greatest risk for complications from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, include older individuals and those with suppressed immune systems. People undergoing cancer treatment often fit both these categories, given that cancer is associated with aging and chemotherapy is an immunosuppressant.

Furthermore, because research has found that coming into health care settings for cancer care is associated with developing COVID-19, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, an alliance of 30 top cancer centers, has issued [new guidelines](#) for treating cancer during the pandemic. The group advises replacing in-person visits with telemedicine appointments and using oral chemotherapy when feasible.

Outpatient care, including disconnecting infusion pumps and providing injections, should be conducted in patient's homes if possible. Also, scans should be conducted less frequently or replaced with blood tests as a means of monitoring treatment response.

The entire cancer care apparatus, including hospitals, oncologists and insurers, is racing to adapt deeply entrenched systems of providing and paying for care. The fact that health care providers don't necessarily have a streamlined process for billing insurers for telemedicine presents a thorny obstacle. Often, neither Medicare, which reimburses \$30 billion for cancer patients' first year of treatment after diagnosis, nor private insurers will reimburse for cancer treatment that occurs outside of traditional settings.

But changes are afoot. According to Justin Bekelman, MD, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Cancer Care Innovation, the use of billing codes for home infusion of IV fluids or medications is growing swiftly.

Check out [“What People With Cancer Need to Know About the New Coronavirus.”](#)

To read the Philadelphia Inquirer article, [click here](#).

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