



## Health Care from a Distance

### *Top advantages of offering a telehealth program*

Telehealth is an emerging trend in health care that continues to rise in popularity. In fact, it is projected that 80% of employers will offer their employees a telehealth solution in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

“Not all employers and employees were quick to use telehealth programs,” says Susan Lehne, Sales Manager, HealthLink, Inc. “But once they are educated about the advantages and the quality of these sorts of programs, they often add them to their health plans.”

Here are some of the top advantages of offering a telehealth program to your employees:

#### **Reduce Medical Costs**

The average telehealth consult costs \$65 versus \$140 for an in-office or retail visit and over \$750 for a trip to the emergency room<sup>1</sup>. A telehealth program is also a great option for employees trying to decide where to go for care. They can get their medical needs addressed instantly, or receive guidance for seeking other avenues of care. Either way, every time an employee gets care through a telehealth program, it saves money for the plan and for them.

#### **Save Time**

Between scheduling, traveling to the appointment and sitting in the waiting room, in-office visits for medical care take up a lot of time. On average,

the total time spent for a typical in-office visit is 121 minutes, with only 20 minutes spent face-to-face with a doctor<sup>1</sup>. A telehealth consult can save an average of 2-3 hours – time that would have been spent as a late arrival, early departure, long lunch or even paid time off. Consults over the weekend or evenings, when doctors’ offices are closed, can also save the employees’ precious personal time, and helps avoid long emergency room or urgent care waits.

#### **Improve Access to Care**

While the demand for primary care doctors has increased, the supply is not growing at the same rate. With telehealth, employees can talk to doctors on-demand and at their convenience. For employees on the road, working in rural locations, or living in underserved areas, these consults can be the difference between having access to medical care and not.

#### **Increase Productivity and Help Attract New Talent**

A telehealth program can help remove the stress and distraction for employees who need medical care. While traditional doctor visits can only be scheduled during business hours, a teleconsult can be scheduled 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year, helping members avoid taking time off and increasing

productivity. And remember, when considering new career opportunities, candidates don’t just look at salary, their benefit package is also important<sup>3</sup>. Offering a telehealth program can position companies as forward thinking and help attract talented candidates.

As more members shop around to become smart health care consumers, a telehealth program is a natural choice – offering easier access to care at lower cost. In fact, many health plans are electing to cover telemedicine consults for employees completely, or to set up a co-pay that makes this kind of care a better consumer choice than emergency room (ER), in-office, or urgent care visits. Remember, consistent communication about the benefits of telehealth is the key to encourage usage to help lower costs for members and the health plan.

*Telehealth is not a replacement for ER care during emergency situations. Employees should call 9-1-1 or go to the ER if they think they could put their health at serious risk by delaying care.*

1. American Well. Telehealth Index: 2016 Employer Benchmark Survey. [americanwell.com](http://americanwell.com).
2. National Business Group on Health. *Financial Incentives for Healthy Lifestyles: Who’s Doing It, What’s Legal and Where’s the Evidence?*. [businessgrouphealth.org](http://businessgrouphealth.org).
3. Alliance for Connected Care. *Assessment of the Feasibility and Cost of Replacing In-person Care with Acute Care Telehealth Services*. [connectwithcare.org](http://connectwithcare.org).