

UW Health: Evidence suggests the pandemic is making even those without COVID-19 sicker

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MADISON, Wis. – From diabetes to depression, more people are seeking medical treatment.

This is leading to longer waits to visit a primary care provider, and emergency rooms, urgent care clinics and hospitals are at or above capacity, according to Dr. Sandra Kamnetz, vice chair of clinical care, family medicine at UW Health and professor of family medicine and community health at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

“Segments of the population of Wisconsin appear to be sicker than before the pandemic, and the average case we are seeing is more serious,” she said. “Many peoples’ routine care was delayed early in the pandemic, but also physical and emotional stressors are greater now.”

In Wisconsin since July 1, 2020, preventative health care appointments were the most likely to be canceled, according to results from a survey of 1,889 people conducted by the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health.

Compounding this, about 48% of survey participants said they were less active than pre-pandemic.

Additionally, a greater number of people are reporting depression and anxiety. In June 2020, about 40% of adults surveyed in the United States reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse, according to a Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention [report](#).

The percentage of anxiety disorders reported was three times greater than the second quarter of 2019, while the prevalence of depression reported was four times greater during that time, the report showed.

Taken as a whole, delayed preventative care and the stress of the pandemic have led to incredibly high numbers of people seeking care, Kamnetz said.

“Evidence continues to show our health has been impacted negatively by this pandemic, and it has impacted capacity at our health care facilities,” she said. “It will be critical that everyone continue to schedule their routine screenings and seek preventative care to stay as healthy as possible.”

Kamnetz is available for interviews today.