



What we did:

First, we looked at all the peer-reviewed literature on this topic.

Then we asked over 900 people with disabilities to tell us in more detail what their barriers to getting health care are in an online survey. We used this information to check if our findings from the literature review matched up with the experiences of people with disabilities.

These are the most frequently reported barriers to getting healthcare for people with disabilities.

Barriers to accessing health care for people with disabilities

A checklist for people with disabilities, their families and disability advocates

The problem

People with disabilities are:

- less likely to get clinical preventive services like cancer screenings, pap smears and mammograms
- more likely to have a weight management problem
- more likely to smoke
- more likely to have an inactive lifestyle

Like most Americans, health care is a central concern for people with disabilities and research has shown people with disabilities experience difficulty in accessing health care. Use this checklist to see what barriers you have getting access to health care.

Transportation barriers

- Public transportation is not available or is hard for me to coordinate.
- Public transportation is not accessible for me.
- Transportation costs too much for me.

Availability and access of service or system barriers

- I have difficulty accessing care because I live in a rural area or the doctor's office is too far away.

Insurance barriers

- I don't have insurance coverage.
- My insurance doesn't cover the services that I need (screening tests, for example).
- Facilities for primary care services are not accessible enough for me.

Insurance barriers, continued

- My insurance coverage does not cover health promotion services.
- My insurance coverage does not cover the medications or co-pays are too high.
- My insurance does not cover care coordination services.
- My co-payment makes primary care services too expensive.
- I'm waiting for approval by the plan before being able to get care.
- There are complex coding systems for provider reimbursement under my insurance.
- I have trouble getting reimbursements for unusual treatments (pool therapy, for example).
- Medicaid is unwilling to reimburse for many services required for me like assistive devices, some prescription drugs, disposable services and personal assistance.
- Medicaid is unwilling to reimburse for my preventive care

Access and accommodation within facilities barriers

- Facilities for health promotion are not accessible enough for me.
- The primary health provider's hours are not convenient for me.
- The wait in the health care office is too long for me.
- The paperwork to fill out is too much for me.
- I could not get an appointment.

Social, family and caregiver support barriers

- I have inadequate support.
- My caregivers suffer from burnout.
- I have difficulty getting personal assistance.
- I am socially isolated.



Barriers for individuals

- I lack knowledge about health and the need for health care.
- I don't understand the system or find it too hard to work through.
- I find it too hard to seek primary care or follow-up from primary care.
- Fear or anxiety keeps me from getting primary care.
- Frustration or anger keeps me from getting primary care.
- Lack of confidence keeps me from getting primary care.
- Lack of assertiveness keeps me from getting primary care.
- Embarrassment keeps me from getting primary care.
- Concern about the cost keeps me from getting primary care.
- Fatigue or pain keeps me from getting primary care.
- I have trouble following up on care (like going to the pharmacy, taking prescribed drugs at the right time or making a follow-up appointment).
- I often miss appointments because of memory problems.
- I have trouble following medical instructions.
- My common health conditions require more care than people without disabilities.
- My disability makes positioning for tests, screenings or exams difficult or impossible.
- I have difficulty communicating with my doctor or the staff.
- I don't have enough family or caregiver support.
- The medical system is too confusing for me.
- My intellectual disability makes it hard to handle the waiting room.
- I am not interested in getting primary care services.
- Because I have many different health problems, it is hard for me to make things like getting a mammogram or a flu shot a priority.
- It is hard for me to travel to get health care.





What you can do

Use this checklist to see what barriers you or someone you know is facing in getting healthcare. Once you know exactly what the problems are, you can focus on finding ways to overcome these barriers. This might be working with a local advocacy group for insurance policy change, or asking your doctor's office to mail you paperwork before your appointment so you have plenty of time to fill it out.

For more information

We have also developed a checklist about barriers for people with disabilities specifically for clinicians and other health care professionals. We hope they will use this checklist to find out what they can do to help people with disabilities get the healthcare they need. This checklist can be found in the publications section of our website: www.healthwellness.org

On our website, you can find information about all of our other projects promoting the health and wellness of people with disabilities. Please visit us there and tell us what you think.

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We're on the web!

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