

# Telehealth visits can boost prenatal, maternal care

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Seeing their doctors via telehealth instead of in person during the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have been as good, and sometimes even better, for pregnant women and new moms.

Researchers from Oregon Health & Science University reviewed 28 randomized [clinical trials](#) and 14 [observational studies](#) that included more than 44,000 women. The goal was to determine the effectiveness and any harms of [telehealth strategies](#) for maternal health care.

Many of the telehealth strategies included were used to treat [postpartum depression](#) or to monitor [diabetes](#) or [high blood pressure](#) during pregnancy. They also served as an alternative to general maternity care for low-risk pregnancies.

Researchers found these appointments resulted in mostly similar, or sometimes better, outcomes compared with in-person care.

The authors said this may mean that telehealth

can be a supplement to usual care for [postpartum depression](#). Telehealth interventions were more likely to improve mood symptoms in the short term compared to in-person care alone, they said, though the effects might not be sustained.

The findings were published July 25 in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

High rates of maternal health issues and death exist in the United States, along with significant health disparities. Access to high-quality care has been shown to lower rates of illness and death, because doctors are able to take timely steps to prevent conditions that can increase the risk for poor outcomes.

Researchers said telehealth may be a possible strategy to improve delivery of maternity care, increase patient satisfaction and reduce health disparities.

This is an area ripe for innovation, the authors said in a journal news release.

They said the findings highlight an ongoing need to incorporate methods to evaluate and close health care gaps. This said this is an important element lacking in the studies they reviewed.

**More information:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has more on having a [healthy pregnancy](#).

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