HealthSpring℠

Appointment wait time standards

Caring for patients

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services sets guidelines for appointment availability and access to primary care, specialist and behavioral health services.

To ensure timely access to care for our members, providers who contract with us to provide Medicare Advantage services should adhere to the following wait time standards.

Behavioral health access standards

Appointment type	Access standard
Emergency	Immediately
Urgent	Immediately
Routine	Within seven business days

Primary care access standards

Appointment type	Appointment availability
Urgent or emergency	Immediately
Nonurgent and nonemergency	Within seven business days
Routine, preventive care	Within 30 business days
On-call response (after hours)	Not to exceed one hour in the event of an emergency
Waiting time in office	15 minutes or less

Specialist access standards

Appointment type	Appointment availability
Urgent or emergency	Immediately
Nonurgent and nonemergency	Within seven business days
Elective	Within 30 business days
High index of suspicion of malignancy	Less than seven days
Waiting time in office	15 minutes or less

After-hours access standards

Call type	Access standard
Emergency	Return call within 60 minutes of receiving it
Nonemergency	Return call within 24 hours
After-hours (when office is closed)	Reliable 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week answering service with a beeper or paging system and on-call coverage arranged with another participating provider (same specialty preferred), or Provider's voice mail directs members to the nearest emergency room when a provider, office staff or other live party isn't available to assist them

Annual survey on access and appointment availability

Each year, we contact a random sample of primary care and behavioral health providers and specialists in our networks to conduct a survey on wait time standards.

To support access to care, please ensure that your office staff are able to answer access and availability questions, and can help members with their routine, urgent and emergency care needs.

Learn more in our **provider manual**.

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