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520 2nd Ave, South Charleston, WV 25303 . wvpresbytery.org . 304-744-7634



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Need more information on Covid 19? Try these links.

[https://www.ncoa.org/ncoa\\_acf/covid-19-resources-for-older-adults/](https://www.ncoa.org/ncoa_acf/covid-19-resources-for-older-adults/)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html>

<https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

<https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/cdc-covid-19.html>

## What Seniors Can Expect as Their New Normal in a Post-Vaccine World

Imagine this scenario, perhaps a year or two in the future: An effective COVID-19 vaccine is routinely available, and the world is moving forward. Life, however, will likely never be the same — particularly for people over 60.

That is the conclusion of geriatric medical doctors, aging experts, futurists and industry specialists. Experts say that in the aftermath of the pandemic, everything will change, from the way older folks receive health care to how they travel and shop. Also overturned: their work life and relationships with one another.

“In the past few months, the entire world has had a near-death experience,” said Ken Dychtwald, CEO of Age Wave, a think tank on aging around the world. “We’ve been forced to stop and think: I could die or someone I love could die. When those events happen, people think about what matters and what they will do differently.”

Older adults are uniquely vulnerable . Their immune systems tend to deteriorate with age, making it so much harder for them to battle not just COVID-19 but all infectious diseases. They are also more likely to suffer other health conditions, like heart and respiratory diseases, that make it tougher to fight or recover from illness. So it’s no surprise that even in the future, when a COVID-19 vaccine is widely available — and widely used — most seniors will be taking additional precautions.

“Before COVID-19, baby boomers” — those born after 1945 but before 1965 — “felt reassured that with all the benefits of modern medicine, they could live for years and years,” said Dr. Mehrdad Ayati, who teaches geriatric medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine and advises the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging. “What we never calculated was that a pandemic could totally change the dialogue.”

It has. On the back is a preview of post-vaccine life for older Americans.

© 2010 by Randy Glasbergen



**“I use so much alcohol-based hand sanitizer, my hands had to join a 12-step program!”**

## **Medical Care**

Time to learn telemed. Only 62% of people over 75 use the internet — and fewer than 28% are comfortable with social media, according to data from the Pew Research Center. “That’s lethal in the modern age of health care,” Dychtwald said, so there will be a drumbeat to make them fluent users of online health care.

**One in 3 visits will be telemed.** Dr. Ronan Factora, a geriatrician at Cleveland Clinic, said he saw no patients age 60 and up via telemedicine before the pandemic. He predicted that by the time a COVID-19 vaccine is available, at least a third of those visits will be virtual. “It will become a significant part of my practice,” he said. Older patients likely will see their doctors more often than once a year for a checkup and benefit from improved overall health care, he said.

**Many doctors instead of just one.** More regular remote care will be bolstered by a team of doctors, said Greg Poland, professor of medicine and infectious diseases at the Mayo Clinic. The team model “allows me to see more patients more efficiently,” he said. “If everyone has to come to the office and wait for the nurse to bring them in from the waiting room, well, that’s an inherent drag on my productivity.”

**Drugstores will do more vaccinations.** To avoid the germs in doctors’ offices, older patients will prefer to go to drugstores for regular vaccinations such as flu shots, Factora said.

**Your plumbing will be your doctor.** In the not-too-distant future — perhaps just a few years from now — older Americans will have special devices at home to regularly analyze urine and fecal samples, Dychtwald said, letting them avoid the doctor’s office.

## **Eating/Shopping**

**Local eateries will gain trust.** Neighborhood and small-market restaurants will draw loyal customers — mainly because these customers know and trust the owners, said Christopher Muller, a hospitality professor at Boston University.

**Safety will be a bragging point.** To appeal to older diners in particular, restaurants will prominently display safety-inspection signage and visibly signal their cleanliness standards, Muller said. They will even hire employees exclusively to wipe down tables, chairs and all high-touch points — and these employees will be easy to identify and very visible.

## **Home Life**

**The homecoming.** Because of so many COVID-19 deaths in nursing homes, more seniors will leave assisted living facilities and nursing homes to move in with their families, Factora said. “Families will generally move closer together,” he said.

**The fortress.** Home delivery of almost everything will become the norm for older Americans, and in-person shopping will become much less common, Factora said.

**Older workers will stay home.** The 60-and-up workforce increasingly will be reluctant to work anywhere but from home and will be very slow to re-embrace grocery shopping. “Instacart delivery will become the new normal for them,” Dychtwald said.

## **Gatherings**

**Forced social distancing.** Whenever or wherever large families gather, people exhibiting COVID-like symptoms may not be welcomed under any circumstances, Ayati said.

**Older folks will disengage, at a cost.** Depression will skyrocket among older people who isolate from family get-togethers and large gatherings, Ayati said. “As the older population pulls back from engaging in society, this is a very bad thing.”

Public restrooms will be revamped. For germ avoidance, they’ll increasingly get no-touch toilets, urinals, sinks and entrances/exits. “One of the most disastrous places you can go into is a public restroom,” Poland said.