

Non-Emergency Health Professionals Action Plan

If you're feeling overwhelmed and unsure of what actions to take during this time, use this guide to get you started. Here's what we'll cover:

Keeping safe

- Protecting yourself
- Protecting your patients

Assessing and generating solutions

- Identifying short-term modifications
- Starting to think long term

Adapting and overcoming

- Converting to digital solutions
- Putting a plan into action

Staying in contact

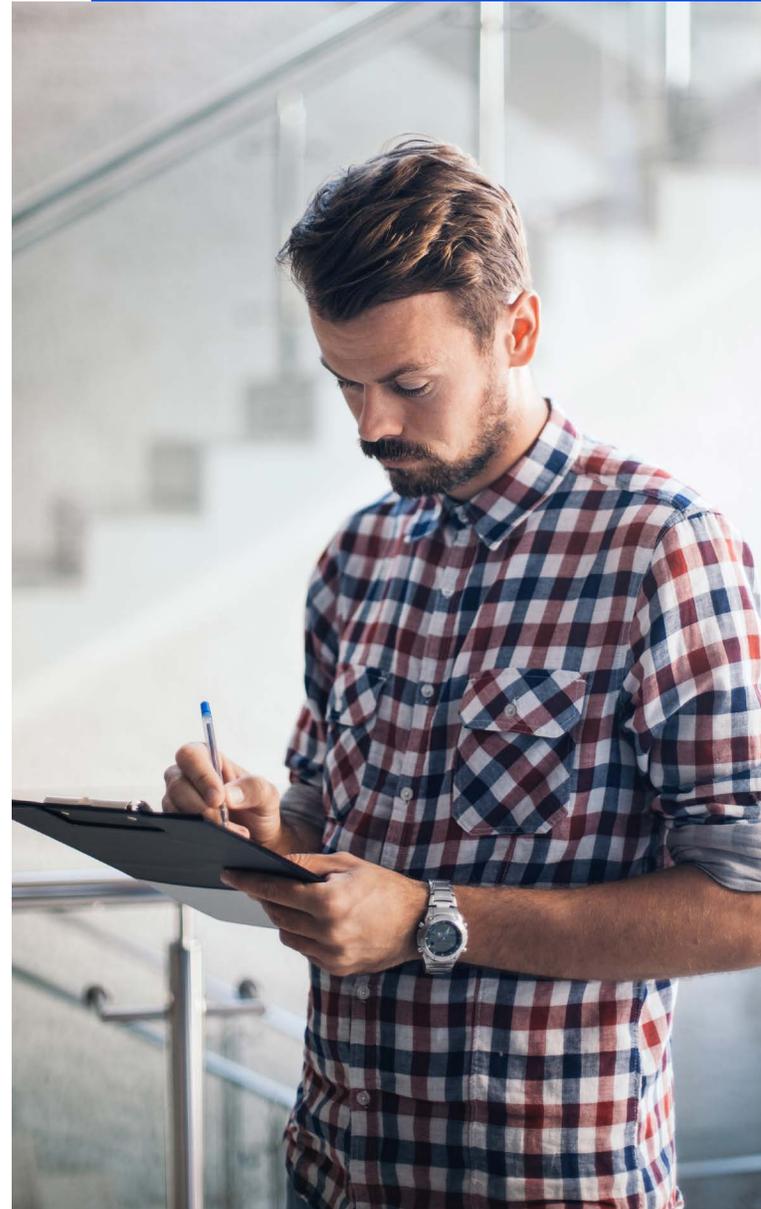
- Updating your communication channels
- Reaching out to clients

Marketing during this time

- Being sensitive and respectful
- Gauging the appropriate path

Planning for the future

- Thinking ahead
- Using what you've learned



The COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic is changing the way we all do business. There is much we still don't know about how this situation will play out.

For health professionals in fields like dentistry, dermatology, and other specialties, the uncertainty is persistent. Professionals need to navigate what services are considered medically necessary at a time like this, what services are still safe to offer right now, and how they can adapt to take care of patients' non-emergency needs as best as they can. And all of this becomes more complicated for those who own and operate their own practice and have the added uncertainty of navigating this situation as a small business owner.

Small business owners and entrepreneurs are some of the most resourceful and resilient people we know. And now's the time to lean into that resourcefulness, make a plan, and get to work. If you're feeling overwhelmed and unsure of what actions to take, this guide will serve as a good starting point.

Let's take a look at some ways that you can take stock of the situation, generate solutions, and take action to fortify your healthcare practice at this time.

As you know, things are developing rapidly. Remain flexible to make changes on the fly.

Remember, you've got us and can get [Constant Contact Help and Support](#) when you need it.



Safety First

Your first priority is to make sure that your family, staff, and especially yourself, are safe and safeguarded, to the best of your ability.

Next, make sure that you're doing everything you can to safeguard your patients.

Implement [CDC-recommended precautions](#) in your business as soon as possible. Among the most important recommendations are:

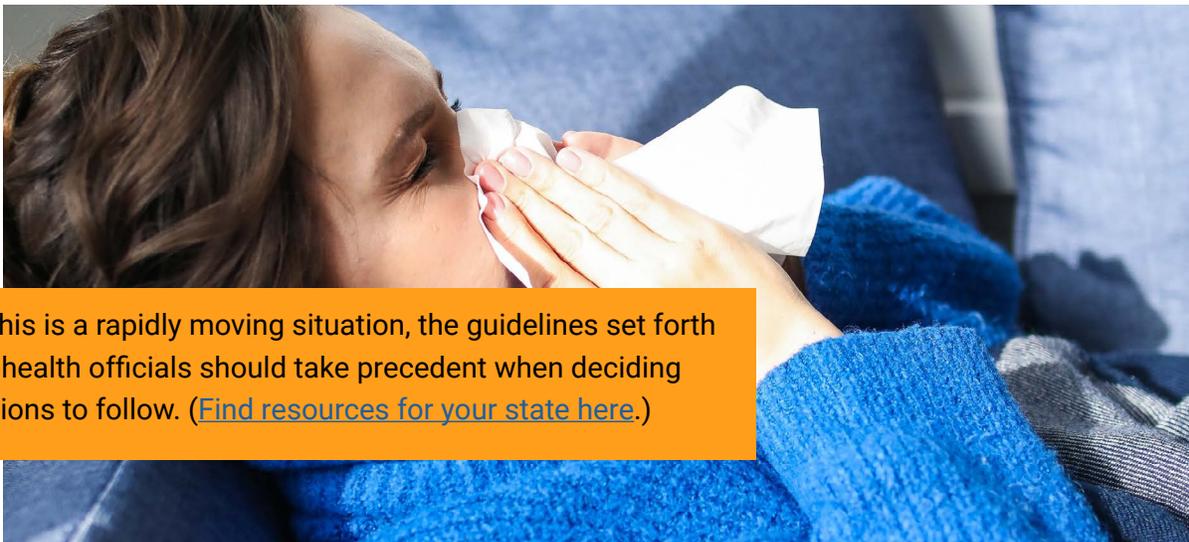


- Postpone elective procedures, surgeries, and non-urgent dental visits.
- Actively encourage employees, especially those who are sick, to stay home. Implement systems that allow them to work from home if possible.
- Emphasize the importance of cough and sneeze etiquette as well as hand hygiene within your practice.
- Perform routine, thorough environmental cleaning.
- Limit in-person services to those that are timely and essential.

You can also review [safety tips specific to healthcare settings on the CDC's website](#).

Once you've done what you can for everyone's health and safety, it's time to figure out how this situation may affect your practice as a business.

It's likely you're already feeling the impact. In any emergency, large or small, you'll often have to assess and reassess to generate solutions because things are always changing.



Note: Since this is a rapidly moving situation, the guidelines set forth by your local health officials should take precedent when deciding what precautions to follow. ([Find resources for your state here.](#))

Assess and generate solutions

Since there are a lot of unknowns, it's important to think about various possibilities and what you can do to adapt to them. The problems you face will vary depending on the nature of your practice. Some of the things we see non-emergency healthcare practices struggling with right now are an inability to provide services due to new social isolation restrictions, a shortage of necessary supplies, communicating new restrictions to patients, and an urgent need to adopt telehealth technologies.

These issues are already changing the way healthcare is done for now, but it's likely that these changes could influence the industry in the future. It's important to look at these problems directly and to make a plan based on what you're able to do now, as well as what you might be able to do later on. Here are some examples of things you should consider.

You may want to write things down as you think through these questions and your answers. It'll help you formulate your action plan.

What services need to be postponed?

- As mentioned above, the CDC recommends deferring any non-emergency treatments.

What services can proceed via telehealth or video conferencing software?

- During this emergency situation, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has provided [new temporary and more flexible HIPAA regulations](#) to empower healthcare providers to more easily reach their patients via videoconferencing.

For services that must proceed in-person, how will you protect yourself, your staff, and patients?

- The CDC recommends calling patients ahead of appointments to make sure that an in-person visit is necessary. If you do delay a procedure, be sure to provide the patient with temporary at-home care instructions.
- Furthermore, you'll want to inform patients before their in-person visit of any additional precautions you're taking at this time to keep everyone safe.

What are you doing about your new patient efforts?

- Consider pausing any general new patient campaigns you have running until new leads are more actionable.

What if you get sick?

- If possible, designate someone else to be in charge of your daily operations.

How will you respond to inquiries from patients during this time?

Consider formulating a response ahead of time that can copy and paste into an email that lays out your office's current policies and response around COVID-19, along with instructions for what patients should do, based on their scenario (non-emergency medical, emergency medical, etc.)

What can you do to help support your patients?

Think about reaching out to them proactively with your office's updated policies. Let them know you are available to provide home-care instructions and solutions in the meantime.

And at some point you may have to ask the bigger questions:

How will you temporarily pause normal operations?

- What will that look like? How will you communicate it with your patients and your community?

Is the "temporary" plan you put into place sustainable? If so, for how long?

- If not, are there things you can do to adjust your plan so it will be sustainable?

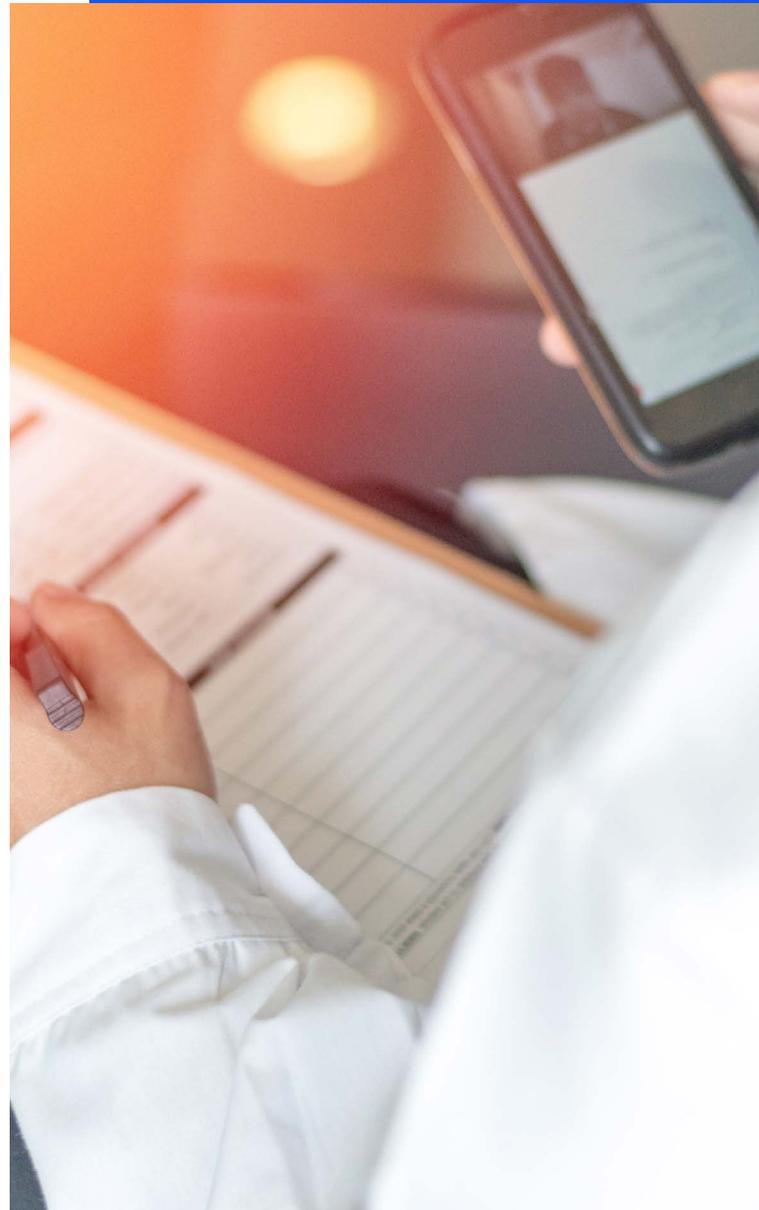
What if this lasts beyond several weeks or months?

- How this would affect your family, as well as your staff, clients and their families – can you help them in some way?

Are there any other resources available to you?

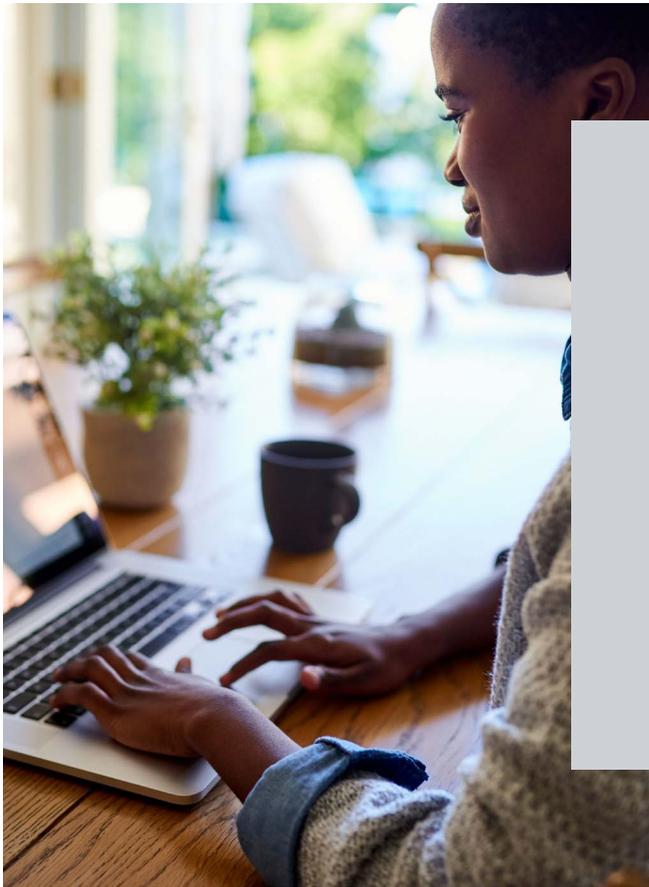
We've compiled a list of resources for you.

[Resources for Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)



Adapt and overcome

Your “business as usual” may no longer exist, at least for the time being. You’ll need to adapt to get through these trying times. Some things to consider:



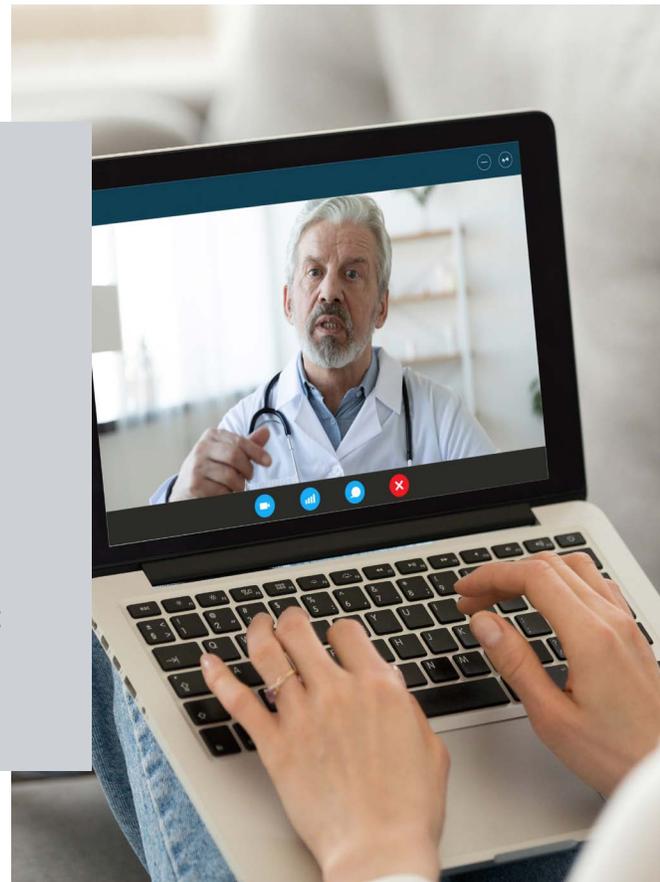
Working from home

If you can, set up work from home options for yourself and your staff. Remember that HIPAA regulations have become [temporarily more flexible](#) to allow you to more-easily conduct patient visits remotely.

Set up a workstation that can stay in place for as long as you need it. Create a space where everyone in the family knows that if you’re in it, you’re working. This can help you to stay focused when you’re working and set up boundaries between working and hanging out at home.

Building out your online patient experience

Your Constant Contact account comes with tools that make it easy to build out your patients’ online experience with your practice. Consider using any extra time you might have as a result of postponed services to think about your communications strategy, including regular emails and social media updates to patients about your services, advice, local health resources, and even patient appreciation initiatives.



Stay in contact

When you're constantly having to make changes to adapt to an ever-changing situation, it's imperative that you let your patients know what you're doing and when.

Keep them aware of any changes to day-to-day operations.

Be sure to include details your patients should know about, like your availability, the options available to patients, and any precautions you're taking regarding the virus.

Consider the following tips to communicate the above information with your patients:



- Update your website.**
- Email your customers.**
- Post to social channels and pin those posts to the top of your feed if possible.**
- Update your details on your Google My Business profile and any other sites where you have a listing.**
- At your physical location, think about hanging signage in your windows and around the office.**

It's also a good idea to review any communications you already had scheduled for their appropriateness and relevance based on the current state of affairs.

Remember, your Constant Contact account comes with tools to create a website, send email (including templates for you to communicate with your contacts about COVID-19 including tips on what to say), post to social media, and more. Need help? See our other resources for [Constant Contact Help and Support](#).

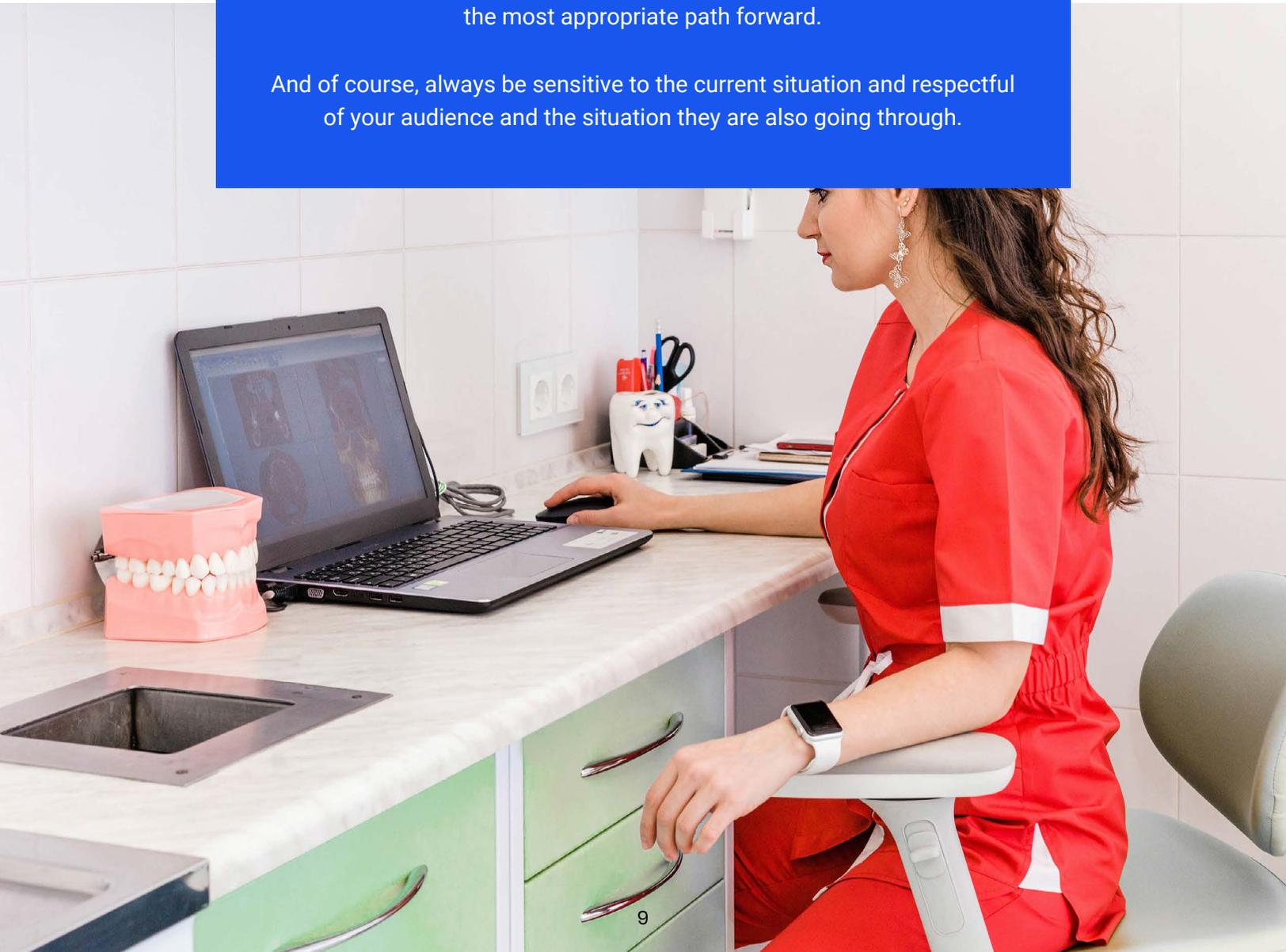




Marketing during this time

Letting people know about the changes you've made is a great place to start. Use the channels mentioned above to communicate on a consistent basis. Of course, consider your unique situation and gauge the most appropriate path forward.

And of course, always be sensitive to the current situation and respectful of your audience and the situation they are also going through.



Plan for the future

Eventually, you'll need to transition back to business as usual. It's important to plan ahead. So, start making plans for what comes after the emergency.

Review the changes you've made and what you've learned, then think about how you can use that information to move forward.

What can stay?

Look for things worth making a permanent part of your practice.



- Did you find telehealth and video conferencing to be a convenient and efficient option for both you and your patients?
- Were people interested in the content and messages you produced during this time?

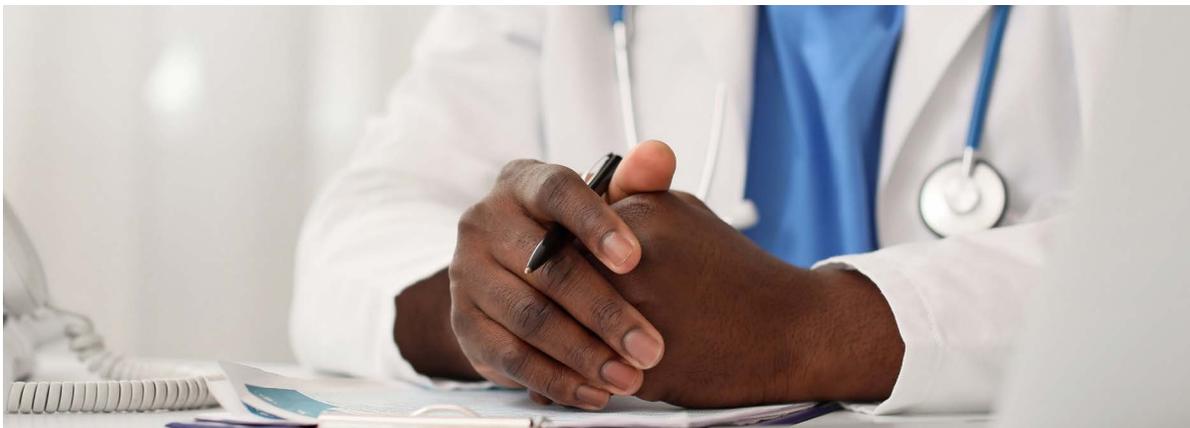
If so, don't stop just because the emergency is over. Keep them going and see if they're a good addition to your business long term. Be mindful of any updates to regulations you'll need to follow.

What comes next?



- Do you need to reach out to your partners and patients?
- If you've paused operations, what will it take to start back up?
- How will you recall your staff? Will it be in stages or all at once?

These are trying times with many unknowns. By doing your best to stay safe, review your options, and make a plan you'll better position yourself to come out on the other side.



Remember, you are not alone

Our marketing advisors are here to help.

- Connect with other small businesses in the [Community](#)
- See our other resources for [Constant Contact Help and Support](#)
- Read *The Download*, our ultimate [online marketing guide for Health Professionals](#)

You've got this. You've got us.

