

Why Broadband is Critical to America's Health

Broadband connectivity is critical to America's health. Telehealth, providing healthcare services and information at a distance, is rapidly growing in popularity and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the value of telehealth to the forefront of national healthcare discussions. The number of hospitals utilizing telehealth [more than doubled over the last decade](#), with savings for both [patient and provider](#). Additionally, medical platforms and technologies need reliable broadband to function. Insufficient access could literally be a matter of life and death.

However, high-speed connectivity is neither available nor affordable for medical professionals and patients in unserved and underserved areas across the country. An estimated [seven percent of small rural healthcare providers](#) and [42 million patients](#) don't have broadband. Those without broadband are often [those who could use telehealth most](#): rural Americans, seniors, and communities with physician shortages. Congress must expand broadband access and adoption to ensure that patients can use telehealth and healthcare providers can use these important medical technologies.

Broadband Improves the Patient Experience Through Telehealth

- Telehealth helps ensure that everyone can receive care, even if they do not live close to a provider. A community without a specialist could have access to more specialized services through telemedicine. Local practitioners have new options to "send" patients to a virtual specialist, giving rural Americans the same treatment as those in larger cities. A [2017 survey](#) found that two-thirds of Americans are willing to see a doctor over video -- the same percentage that said they delayed care for a health issue.
- Telehealth is cheaper than traditional healthcare. Patients can reduce in-hospital stays when their doctors are able to monitor them at home. By offering hospital-level care remotely, telehealth can save individuals as much as [\\$1,500 per visit](#). The Veterans Health Administration saved [nearly \\$1 billion](#) in one year by implementing telehealth services. There are also savings for patients looking for standard care -- around \$114 per visit. In one program, telehealth created a [\\$12 return](#) for every dollar spent on providing basic clinical services to medically-underserved populations.

Broadband Enables Providers to Offer Better, More Affordable Care in More Places

- There are a number of systems and technologies built upon broadband that can revolutionize healthcare offerings for many in this country.
- [Electronic Health Records](#) (EHRs) allow for quick and secure transmission between providers, allowing physicians to see a patient's records and information before diagnosing. They also save time and money. The Federal Communications Commission has [estimated](#) that just implementing EHRs and remote monitoring could save \$700 billion for healthcare providers over two decades.
- Network-connected healthcare technology, such as wireless sensors, monitoring devices, EKGs, and smart beds, allow for quicker and more efficient care. Doctors can see medical information in an instant and easily keep track of patients in both the hospital and at home. One caregiver, for instance, [explained in a U.S. Chamber of Commerce report](#) that her grandmother can remain independent through use of telemedicine visits and smart sensors. These sensors track information like whether she is taking medication or putting more weight on one side of her walker.