

VIRTUAL VISITS WITH A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER



While “telemedicine” has been around for years, the arrival of the coronavirus (COVID-19) has accelerated the usage of this service within healthcare practices. As safety dictates that people minimize physical contact and proximity with others, telemedicine, also referred to as “telehealth,” has become a valuable tool for seeking non-emergency medical treatment.



WHAT IS TELEHEALTH?

While some healthcare institutions use telehealth to encompass all communication and sharing of medical information between patients and health systems, such as images, information in a patient data portal, remote monitoring of patient vital signs, or a consultation through a video or teleconference, it is most commonly used to mean a virtual visit with a healthcare provider.



PREPARING FOR A VIRTUAL VISIT

Virtual visits are both similar to and different than a traditional visit to your doctor's office. In order to get the most out of your virtual visit, it is helpful to know what to expect and how to prepare. Use the checklist below to get ready for your telehealth visit and make the most out of your appointment.



SETTING AND TECHNOLOGY

- Find a quiet, private place to talk. Make sure you can be there for 15-30 minutes. Most actual appointments last about 15 minutes.
 - Don't sit outside where wind or other noises may be heard
 - Don't sit near a window where the daylight may make it hard for the doctor to see your face
- Determine what technology you will use for the visit (phone, tablet or computer)
- Turn off any devices that you will NOT be using for the visit so that alerts don't distract you
- Make sure that you have reliable internet, a wired connection if available
- Make sure that the device (phone, tablet, computer) is fully charged or plugged in
- Test your technology
 - Set the camera at eye-level so that your doctor has a clear view of you
 - Test your webcam
 - Make sure that your volume is turned on
 - Test your microphone
 - Download the app that your doctor's office uses (if applicable)
 - Close any unnecessary programs on your device



PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

- Think about what you want to accomplish during the visit. Try to prioritize what's most important for you during the call, as time may be limited:
 - Getting help for a specific medical condition or set of symptoms
 - Understanding your medications or treatment options
 - Renewing a prescription
- Write down specific questions or concerns



CURRENT HEALTH INFORMATION

- Complete any forms or other paperwork that the healthcare provider's office requested
- Have your insurance card available
- Have your credit card information available (for co-pay, if applicable)
- Have your pharmacy phone number and address available in case you receive a prescription
- Have a list of the medications and supplements that you take available
- If possible, know your vital signs (temperature, pulse rate, blood pressure, height and weight)
- Have a seizure diary or information on your seizure frequency, type, duration, and severity
- Identify any symptoms that you are having. How severe are they? When did they start?
- Note any difficulties you may have doing normal daily activities
- Have you been tested for COVID-19? If so, what were the results?
- Are others in your home ill? If so, for how long?



THE VISIT

- Have paper and a pen ready to take notes during the call
- Have the phone number for the doctor's office handy (in case you get disconnected during the visit)
- Be patient. There may be a high volume of calls, so you may have to wait to be connected
- Your telehealth program may have you talk to a nurse or medical assistant before connecting you to the doctor
- Talk clearly, making sure the doctor can hear you
- Clearly present the purpose for your visit
- Answer the doctor's questions as clearly and to the point as possible
- Make notes of the doctor's recommendations and ask questions if something is unclear
- Repeat instructions to make sure that you understand what you have been told
- Confirm if you should follow up