

Can We Talk... About Telehealth?

Tips to Prepare for a Telehealth Appointment



National Patient
Advocate Foundation

Telehealth is a safe and convenient way to receive some of the care that you need without having to leave home. Telehealth appointments are “virtual”, meaning they are typically handled by having the doctor, nurse or other practitioner conduct your appointment with them using your smartphone, computer or tablet.

Many patients and families find that participating in this type of virtual appointment from where they live relieves time, travel, transportation costs and other challenges connected with going to the doctor’s office. Telehealth has become readily available now in efforts to reduce risk of exposure to COVID-19 during the pandemic. It’s an option that you, your family and your care team might consider that will help keep your health care needs on schedule. Despite these benefits, some people may feel daunted initially at the idea of using technology or reluctant to have a “virtual visit” for other reasons. Here are five tips that may help ease your concerns and have you get the most out of your telehealth appointment.

1. Come prepared with questions you want to get answered.

As with an in-person appointment, write down ahead of time what you’d like to share with your doctor and what you would like to get out of the visit. For tips to talk about what matters to you, visit: <https://www.npaf.org/can-we-talk/>

2. Find out if your telehealth appointment is covered by your insurance.

Before your appointment, contact your insurer, or visit [FAIRHealthconsumer.org](https://www.fairhealthconsumer.org), to confirm that telehealth appointments are covered by your insurance plan. Ask your insurer what your co-pay, or out-of-pocket cost, will be for a telehealth appointment and if that cost differs from an in-person appointment. Knowing this cost ahead of time may allow you to budget appropriately, or help you decide if you need to be seen in-person instead.

3. Consider having a caregiver or advocate with you.

Having someone with you during your telehealth appointment might help you feel more comfortable. A family member, caregiver, or other type of advocate might also remember additional details about how you have been feeling or raise some concerns you hadn’t thought to discuss. Having this additional input may lead to information or support from your doctor that may be beneficial to you.

4. If you have any concerns about using telehealth, tell your doctor.

Do not hesitate to raise any concerns with your doctor, especially if it is your first time using telehealth. For example, you may want to know how to get around internet connectivity challenges, how your privacy and health information is protected, or if telehealth may interfere with the quality of care that is being provided. Your health care team should be equipped to address your concerns and help determine if telehealth is the best option for you.

5. Clarify next steps.

Review your notes before disconnecting to make sure your key questions were addressed. Do you need to schedule another appointment, or need a referral or a new prescription? Are there things you can be doing from home? Having a clear understanding of the next steps will help you feel more confident about your care plan and with using telehealth in the future.

For more patient and caregiver resources,
please go to [npaf.org/can-we-talk](https://www.npaf.org/can-we-talk)