

Simple Guide to Navigating Telemedicine for Patients and Caregivers



Communicating with health care providers may be more challenging than ever in the wake of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people stay at home as much as possible—especially those that may be more susceptible to the severe symptoms of COVID-19, such as older adults or those with some types of chronic medical conditions. Despite the current circumstances, virtual visits may be an option for you or your loved one to communicate with a health care provider using a variety of common telemedicine websites/apps such as Teladoc, Doctor On Demand, MDLive, Doxy.me, and Amwell. **Check with your health care provider and insurance to see if telemedicine is an option for you.** The following guide offers suggestions for how patients and their caregivers may communicate with providers through telemedicine.

What is telemedicine?

According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), “Telehealth, telemedicine, and related terms generally refer to the exchange of medical information from one site to another through electronic communication to improve a patient’s health.” It is important to know that telemedicine visits—including video calls—are not recorded and instead simply allow your health care provider to communicate with you from a distance.

What sort of technology can be used for telemedicine?

If your health care provider conducts telemedicine virtual visits, you may need the following options:

Methods of Communication:



Telephone



Video calls (eg, FaceTime, Skype)



Secure email



Secure text messaging



Patient portal



Social media private communications (eg, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts)

- A virtual visit can only happen if it is private and not public facing (eg, **NOT** through using Facebook Live or Stories, or a post on your profile or news feed)

This Simple Guide to Navigating Telemedicine for Patients and Caregivers is for general informational purposes only and is not exhaustive. This Guide is not intended to be a substitute for reviewing information available from your insurance company, treating health care provider, or relevant public health authorities, including the CDC. It is not medical advice. Patients and caregivers should always consult their health care provider to learn about available telemedicine options and regarding individual health care and treatment decisions. ACADIA is not endorsing any specific telemedicine platforms.

Technology:



A computer, tablet, or phone (equipped with a webcam for video calls)



Broadband internet connection and/or Wi-Fi



Video conferencing software

How do I set up a telemedicine appointment with my health care provider?

To stay informed on what your provider may use, please speak with your health care provider directly.

What are some suggestions to prepare for a telemedicine appointment?



Preparation:

- Before the visit, ask your health care provider or the office staff:
 - what technology you will need
 - how long the appointment will be
 - what your provider may be looking for or have you do
 - if there are any supplies you may need
- Have your medications (or a list of your medications) handy in case your provider has any questions
- Write down what your concerns and/or questions are or any changes you may have noticed since your last visit
- Be prepared to take notes



Setup:

- Log in early so you have time to test your technology
- Ensure your device is charged
- Pick a quiet location with good lighting, and if possible, a plain background
- If your provider indicated that they may need to see you do any specific activities (eg, walking) ensure you have enough space to do so

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