

Top 10 Things You Should Know About Telehealth

Have you heard about telehealth? It's a great way to practice social distancing while still getting the care you need. More health care providers are offering the option of having a virtual video visit.

Here are 10 things you should know about telehealth:

- 1. It's safe.** You meet with a provider through a secure video visit on your computer, tablet, or smartphone. Your provider must comply with the same federal¹ and State² requirements for patient privacy and confidentiality that apply for in-person visits.
- 2. It's convenient.** You schedule a visit at a time that works for your schedule. Some online companies have a provider network available on-demand 24/7.³
- 3. You can receive a range of services for urgent, primary, and specialty care.** Telehealth treats a variety of medical conditions, including allergies, arthritis, asthma, colds/flu, headaches, insect bites, pink eye, rashes, sore throats, urinary tract infections, and sports and other physical injuries.
- 4. Emergencies are still emergencies.** Not all care can be delivered using telehealth. It's important to go to the nearest emergency room or call 911 if you have a life-threatening injury, illness, or major trauma.
- 5. Medication can be prescribed or refilled.** Providers can electronically prescribe or refill your medication. Some restrictions and limitations may apply.⁴
- 6. It reduces your risk of exposure to illness like COVID-19.** Telehealth protects you from possibly spreading or getting an illness from sitting in a waiting room. This is important if you are at higher risk due to your age or an existing condition.⁵



¹ The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal legislation that sets rules for who can look at and receive your medical information and prevents unauthorized use of your health data. More information is available at:

www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-individuals/faq/index.html.

² Maryland law builds on federal protections and places certain requirements and restrictions pertaining to the confidentiality, maintenance, use, disclosure, patient access, and scope of health information in any form (oral, written, and electronic) collected by providers and health organizations. More information available at: health.maryland.gov/psych/pdfs/Medicalreports.pdf.

³ Online telehealth companies are an option if you are seeking virtual care and may or may not have a provider or health insurance. Check out www.techhealthdirectory.com for a list. Please note: MHCC does not certify or endorse any telehealth technology, software, applications, or products.

⁴ Some restrictions have been waived during the COVID-19 State of Emergency; it is recommended to consult with your provider.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness*. Available at:

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html.

7. ***You might use peripheral devices to help your provider diagnose or assess your medical condition.*** Peripheral devices connect to your computer, tablet, or smartphone and are used to collect and transmit audio, video, images, and other health data (e.g., vitals, blood glucose levels, etc.) to your provider.⁶ Devices may be provided by your provider or purchased by you.
8. ***Most health insurance plans cover telehealth.*** Your health insurance plan will likely pay for telehealth services, though a copayment or deductible may apply.⁷
9. ***Prepare like you would for an in-person appointment.*** Write down your symptoms and any questions you wish to discuss with your provider. Also be sure to have your medical history, medications and pharmacy, insurance, and emergency contact information available.
10. ***It does not replace in-person care.*** Providers are increasingly using technology to deliver care in the wake of social distancing guidelines. Certain medical conditions and services may require you to be seen in-person by a provider.

Additional Resources

US Department of Health and Human Services

telehealth.hhs.gov/patients/

HealthCare Information and Management
Systems Society

www.himss.org/news/patients-guide-telemedicine

MHCC

mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/Pages/hit/hit_telemedicine/hit_telemedicine_consumer.aspx

Questions?

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⁶ Maryland Health Care Commission, *Remote Patient Monitoring: Value for Patients and Applications During a Public Health Emergency*, May 2020. Available at: mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/hit/hit/documents/HIT_RPM_for_Providers_Brief.pdf.

⁷ Many insurance companies have expanded coverage for telehealth during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. More information is available at: mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/hit/hit_telemedicine/documents/HIT_Telehealth_COVID_19_Flyer.pdf.