Getting Started with Telehealth

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What is Telehealth?

Telehealth is a way to see your health care provider (or provider) using a computer, tablet, or phone without visiting their office. It's like a phone call or a video call with your doctor. Telehealth services may also include managing different aspects of your healthcare online. Examples of care you can receive through telehealth include:

- Schedule an appointment or request a referral.
- Check in on medical issues.
- Discuss lab tests or X-ray results.
- Managing chronic conditions.
- Preventative care measures.
- Mental health treatment, including therapy and counseling.

Types of Telehealth Care

There are different types of telehealth care, including:

Live Video Visits. This is a live video conferencing appointment between the patient and their provider.

Audio Visits. The appointment with your provider is a phone call.

Secure messaging. It's a way for a patient and provider(s) to send messages back and forth online, privately and securely, about the patient's medical care.

Remote monitoring. A provider may want to monitor certain health conditions over time. In these cases, you might use a medical device with an internet connection to share information with your doctor, like your blood pressure.

What is a Patient Portal?

It is a secure website that allows you to access your medical information and communicate with your providers online using an internet browser or app on a computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. To get started, you'll need to set up an account to access the patient portal. Contact your provider for help setting up your account.

Telehealth Appointments: Technical Requirements

- Select a quiet, well-lit, **private location** for the meeting **with strong internet access.** Use a tool like Speedtest.net to test your internet connection

- Use a **device you are comfortable using** that meets the technical requirements.

- You will need a **video camera** on your chosen device **for video appointments.** If your device does not have a camera, you can attach an external camera to your device.

- For **video appointments,** you will need a speaker, microphone, and camera on your chosen device. Most devices have a built-in speaker and microphone, or you can attach an external camera, headphone, or microphone.

- Do you have the **required software?** Make sure you have the recommended browser or software installed on your device and that it is up to date. Install and test it before your appointment so you have time to resolve problems.

- **Additional Resources**. To learn more about finding, downloading, and installing an app or connecting it to a Wi-Fi network on your iOS or Android smartphone or tablet, watch PLA DigitalLearn's courses *Using a Mobile Device* for help. The course is available on the PLA DigitalLearn website: https://www.digitallearn.org/.

Tips for Troubleshooting Technical Problems

1. If video or camera icons have a slash through them, it means they are turned off, and your healthcare provider can't see or hear you. Click on the icon to turn it on.

2. Restart your device.

3. Make sure your device is fully charged or plugged in.

4. Close open applications you are not using.

5. Make sure you have the application you need for the appointment and that it is up to date.

6. If your internet connection is unstable, try turning off your camera.

7. If you can't fix the problem, try using another device.

8. Contact your healthcare provider for help.

Finding Telehealth Options

How can you find a healthcare provider who supports telehealth?

1. Ask your current provider what telehealth options they offer.
2. Contact your health insurance company, Medicare or Medicaid, to see if they have a list of providers who offer telehealth services.
3. If you don't have health insurance, see if a healthcare center in your area provides telehealth services regardless of a patient's ability to pay. The Health Resources & Services Administration has a tool, https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov., to find health centers in your area.

Preparing for Your Telehealth Visit

When scheduling the appointment:

- Ask if your healthcare appointment can be a telehealth appointment.

- Make sure your telehealth appointment will be covered by Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, or a marketplace insurance plan.

- Inform the scheduler if you need an accommodation like an interpreter, real-time captioning, telecommunications relay service, etc,. during the appointment.

Two Days Before the appointment:

- Write a list of the questions you want to discuss during the appointment.

- Gather the information you may need during your appointment, including:
  - A list of your allergies.
  - An up-to-date list of your prescriptions.
  - A list of the medical devices you use.
  - A list of preexisting conditions.
  - A list of your doctors and information about recent medical appointments or hospitalizations.
  - The address of your preferred pharmacy.

- Log into your patient portal to

  - Make sure you remember your username and password.
  - Check that your information is up to date.
  - See if your provider has requested information for the appointment.

On the day of the appointment:

- Verify you received a link via text message, email, or in the portal to attend the appointment.
- Review the instructions about how to access the telehealth appointment.
- Wear clothing that makes it easy to show areas of your body that your provider may need to see.
- Find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted or overheard.
- Verify that your device works and that the internet connection is strong.
- Have your provider's telephone number in case you need to call for assistance.
- Fill out any paperwork that is required as part of the check-in process.

Tip for Making the Most of Your Telehealth Visit

Approach your telehealth appointment the way you approach your in-person visit.

- Arrive 15 minutes early to resolve technical issues.
- Be patient. You may be put in a virtual waiting room until the provider is ready.
- A pop-up message may appear asking for access to your microphone and camera. Click yes or allow.
- Make sure your healthcare provider can see and hear you.
- Let your healthcare provider know if you have problems seeing or hearing them.
- Review your list of questions with your provider. Ask questions if you need help understanding something.
- Take notes.
- Review the provider's notes from the appointment in the patient portal after the appointment.

Learn More

Visit www.digitallearn.org for more courses and to help build skills and confidence using technology.

Today's training is provided by the Public Library Association with support from Heartland Forward.