



Understanding Virtual Doctor's Appointments



What is virtual care?

Virtual care (or a virtual doctor's appointment) is a way for you to talk to your doctor by telephone or by video from the comfort of your own home.

What are the benefits of virtual appointments?

- Using virtual appointments means you can still talk to or see your doctor.
- It also means you can stay home and limit your risk of exposure to COVID-19, which helps to keep you, your doctor, and other patients safe.
- This is especially helpful if:
 - you have a chronic illness or feel at risk,
 - you want to minimize in-person visits to the office,
 - you need to be screened for COVID-19, or
 - you need care related to COVID-19.

What do I need for a virtual doctor's appointment?

- If you feel most comfortable talking to your doctor over the phone, or your doctor has recommended telephone appointments, all you need is a phone.
- If you and your doctor have decided that video appointments are best, then you need:
 - an email address,
 - access to the internet, and
 - a smartphone OR a tablet OR a computer with a webcam and microphone (many have these built in)
- If you are using a mobile device like a smartphone or a tablet, your doctor may ask you to download a free application from the iPhone App Store or Google Play Store.

How does a telephone appointment work?

- With a telephone appointment, your appointment will be done completely by phone.
- Your doctor will tell you if you should expect a call, OR if you should call the office for your appointment.

How does a video appointment work?

- With a video appointment, your appointment will be like a face-to-face visit.
- Your doctor will provide you the information you need to get started.
- Your doctor might use a medical videoconferencing program, or they might use a general one like FaceTime or Skype – your doctor will send you the information you need based on the videoconferencing program they've decided is best for them and for you.

Do I have to pay for virtual care?

No. Your virtual appointment will be covered by OHIP, just like an in-person appointment.

What if I need to see my doctor in person?

- Some health concerns can be addressed in a virtual appointment alone, but if your doctor decides that you need to be seen in person, they may ask you to come into the office, or visit a hospital or other health care facility.
- If you need to visit the doctor's office in person, make sure to call ahead of time. The receptionist may ask you to wait in your car or outside of the clinic when you arrive until it is time for your appointment to begin.

What if I can't do a virtual appointment, or I don't feel comfortable having one?

- If you can't do a virtual appointment or you don't feel comfortable having a virtual appointment, you can let your doctor know. They might be able to see you in person or they might refer you to another doctor who can see you in person.
- You should know that visiting a doctor in person puts you at higher risk of coming into contact with COVID-19 and passing it along to others. Because of COVID-19, there also may be a longer wait time to see your doctor or another doctor in person.

What if it's an emergency?

For emergencies, you should always call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Should I be worried about my privacy?

- Your doctor will do their best to make sure that any information you give to them during virtual care appointments is private and secure.
- Your doctor might ask you to read a list of the possible privacy risks and agree to them before your appointment.
- You can help keep your information private and secure by:
 - making sure you're in a private area during your virtual appointments,
 - using a personal email and device (not a public or employer-provided device), and
 - using your home Internet network (not a public network).