

# Telehealth at home or work

Information for consumers

## What is Telehealth?

Telehealth is the use of technology (usually video) to provide healthcare over a distance. Telehealth aims to make it easier for people who live in rural and remote areas, or who have difficulty accessing healthcare providers, to have a consultation without having to travel long distances.

## Using Telehealth

Speak to your GP or healthcare professional about requesting a Telehealth consultation with your specialist. Remember that some health care cannot be provided at a distance; your specialist may decide that Telehealth consultation is not appropriate in some circumstances.

Telehealth appointments can happen from anywhere – as long as you have the equipment. You will need:

- A **computer** (Windows or Mac), or **tablet** or **smart phone**
- A **webcam** (built in or USB)
- A **microphone** (usually built in to most laptop computers or webcams) and **speakers**
- A reliable **internet connection**
- A reliable phone

You can test your setup using the information on the Barwon South West Telehealth website (<https://www.bswtelehealth.org.au/index.php/test>). Try and do this **before** your first appointment.

Don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions, or need help before, during or after your appointment.

## Who can be part of the consultation?

You can have a support person or family member join the consultation with you. You can also request that your GP or another healthcare professional attend with you; if this is the case, they may suggest holding the consultation from their office or clinic.

If you have special needs, such as an interpreter, this can also be arranged as long as you let your health professional know in advance so that this support can be arranged as part of booking your appointment.

At the start of the appointment everyone present will be introduced. As with a face-to-face appointment, there may be students, trainees or other staff present. You can always ask them to leave at any time.

## What will I need to do on the day?

Please have your phone turned on and available, so you can be contacted if there are any problems with your Telehealth appointment.

You will need to make sure that your computer, internet connection, speakers, microphone and camera are all turned on and working, and follow the set-up and access instructions.

Prepare for the appointment as you would for a face-to-face appointment.

- Be ready at least 15 minutes prior to the allocated appointment time.

**IMPORTANT:** If you are unable to attend the appointment, please call to cancel or reschedule as early as possible.

As with other appointments, clinics often run behind time and you may have to wait before the specialist joins your appointment. Be ready anyway – you will see and hear when the appointment starts.

A Telehealth consultation is like any other appointment. Try to:

- avoid any possible interruptions to your appointment (e.g. visitors, noise)
- speak as clearly as possible, and
- look at the screen.

### **What about privacy?**

As with a face-to-face appointment:

- No one (including you, family or healthcare professionals) may record (e.g. photo, video or audio recording) the consultation without the written consent of all involved.
- Health professionals will keep a written record of the consultation and this will go into your medical record.
- If you wish to speak privately with the healthcare provider, ask any other people present to leave the room.

### **What about follow up?**

You may be offered follow-up appointments. Appointments could be by Telehealth again, or in person with your healthcare provider. Tests and investigations will be arranged with you and appropriate providers.

### **What if I'm not happy with the consultation?**

If you don't like the style of a Telehealth consultation you are always welcome to choose face-to-face consultations in future. You may also ask to stop the Telehealth consultation at any time. The choice is always yours.

As with any consultation, if you are not happy with the outcome or decisions, you can always ask to see another healthcare professional or seek a second opinion.

### **Are there any charges?**

Please speak to your specialist about any costs to you for a Telehealth consultation. If you ask your GP or another healthcare professional to attend the consultation with you, please discuss their potential fees with them. Both your medical specialist and your GP may bill Medicare. If eligible, you may be given Medicare billing consent forms to sign prior to your Telehealth consultation.

Please check that your internet usage plan covers the data used during a Telehealth consultation. A typical 20 minute call on a good internet connection may use as much 600 Megabytes of data.

### **How can I give feedback?**

It is very important and useful to us and the future of Telehealth consultations that you share your experiences, and a survey may be provided for you to complete. We are interested in any feedback about our service and encourage you to provide this, either verbally or in writing. Feedback will be managed in a confidential way.

