



# PATIENTS

## TELEHEALTH GUIDANCE AND FAQs

### TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL CONSULTATION

#### 1 PREPARING FOR THE CONSULTATION

- Write down a list of the health issues that you need to discuss with your doctor. If you have been asked to track any symptoms or readings such as blood pressure, weight, blood sugar, etc., make sure that you have the necessary information on you for reference during the consultation.
- Take photos of any physical evidence that may be related to your consultation.
- Have a list available of all the medication (including dosage) that you are currently using and any other pertinent information and/or special investigation results that relate to your consultation.
- Set a reminder to notify you that your consultation is about to commence.
- Dress appropriately as the healthcare professional will see you throughout the consultation.

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*“A virtual consultation is a remote video conversation between a patient and a healthcare professional. This process is not changing the who, but rather the when, where and how of care delivery.”*

#### 2 PREPARING FOR THE ONLINE CALL

- Choose a quiet, room where you will not be disturbed and where you have the necessary privacy required for a medical consultation.
- Take care to optimise the lighting in the room. Your aim is to have a clear image of yourself on the screen. If necessary, switch on an overhead light and position yourself so as to avoid windows positioned from behind or beside you distorting your on-screen image.
- The device that you plan to use for the consultation should have a working webcam and or built-in camera as well as a reliable microphone and speakers.
- The consultation is done via an online platform so check that you will have sufficient data access on the device that you will be using.

- Ensure that the device is fully charged prior to commencing with the online call.
- Perform an image and sound check of the equipment that you will be using.
- Set-up the camera at eye-level. This will make it easier for your healthcare professional to see and engage with you.
- Also consider switching off any programmes that may be in use on the device so as to ensure optimal functioning of both the device and the internet connection.

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### 3 STARTING THE ONLINE CALL

- When you are ready to call, access the link for the consultation via
  - the Safari web browser if you are using an iOS device (iPhone/iPad) or
  - the Google Chrome browser if you are using any other device.
- Access the link approximately 5 minutes prior to your appointment start time to ensure that everything is in place and in working order.
- In the event that there is an issue with the internet connection and you cannot proceed with the video call, have the number of the practice on hand so that you could contact your doctor/the practice directly via telephone.

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### 4 DURING THE CONSULTATION

- Share your screen when prompted.
- Stay engaged. Make sure you look into the camera and stay close to your device so that the healthcare professional can clearly see and hear you.
- Act the same as when you're in a face-to-face consultation.
- There might be a slight voice delay during the conversation. Keep that in mind to avoid speaking simultaneously with the healthcare professional.
- Provide the healthcare professional with a thorough explanation of your medical issue, symptoms and medication that you're currently using. Inform your healthcare professional about the doses, frequency, and side effects, if any.
- If you need a repeat script, inform the healthcare professional.
- Listen carefully and ask questions to clarify uncertainties.
- Make sure that you follow the instructions given to you by the doctor.
- If there are changes to your medication, enquire whether you should schedule a follow-up consultation to discuss the effect of the medication.
- Ask about follow-up visits. Will it be another virtual consultation? Are there laboratory tests that you will need to visit the practice for? Can all activities be scheduled on the same day? Are there special precautions you should take for a face-to-face consultation?
- Once you have concluded the consultation with the doctor, ensure that you have discussed any specific questions that you may have with regards to your treatment plan. If either yourself and/or your doctor feels that an in-person consultation is still required, proceed with the necessary arrangements.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## 1. How do I pay for a virtual consultation?

Virtual consults are not free consultations. Please confirm the payment options with your treating doctor before the consultation takes place. Some medical aids may opt to cover costs, others may not depending on the benefit structure and available benefits at the time of the consultation.

## 2. How do I prepare for a virtual consultation?

Please refer to the guidance provided above. There are a few simple elements you will need to check before your consultation takes place.

## 3. Does this mean I can't see my doctor in person or go to hospital?

No, you are still able to choose to see your doctor in person should you wish. There will also be instances where virtual consultations are not appropriate and you will have to attend in-person.

## 4. Is a telehealth consultation appropriate in an emergency?

No, please call ER24 on 084 124 in case of emergency.

## 5. Will doctors treat new patients or only patients known to them?

During COVID-19 doctors are permitted to treat new patients

using virtual telehealth technology - this however is liable to change. Prior to this it was only appropriate when an existing relationship with the doctor was present or in the instance of telepsychology or telepsychiatry.

## 6. What are the benefits of virtual consultations?

Virtual consultations give patients the opportunity to receive care without a trip to the doctor's office. They don't have to take time away from work or family responsibilities.

They don't waste time traveling, or money on parking or public transportation. At this time, during the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth also assists with efforts to maintain social distancing.

## 7. Why is there now an enhanced focus on telehealth?

Telehealth offers a convenient mechanism for patients to access their healthcare provider, given that COVID-19 has placed an emphasis on social distancing.