

WHAT IS TELEHEALTH AND IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

A guide for consumers and patients



What is telehealth?

Telehealth is a convenient way to have a **consultation** with a GP, specialist, nurse or allied health professional without travelling to a hospital or clinic. With the right technology, you can access healthcare from a location that suits you best such as your home. During a telehealth appointment you can do most of the things (e.g. obtain advice, results, prescriptions, or referrals) you would do if you attended in-person.

Telehealth can use **telephone** or **video conferencing** (also called video consultations). If you choose to use video, you and your healthcare provider will be able to see and hear each other. If you choose to use a telephone service, there will be no video, only audio.



Why would I use telehealth?

- ✓ During a crisis such as COVID-19 you can **access healthcare** without risking your safety, the safety of your family and your healthcare professional.
- ✓ Telehealth **improves access** to care especially for people who live in remote communities or find it difficult to attend appointments.
- ✓ Telehealth can **save you time and money** as you don't have to travel to an appointment.
- ✓ Using telehealth may **save you travel** - you may not need to arrange to leave work or home responsibilities, or ask someone to take you to an appointment.

Can anyone use telehealth?

Many people will be able to choose telehealth for some or all of their non-urgent healthcare consultations. If you are unsure, your doctor or healthcare provider is the best person to advise. Not all situations are suitable for telehealth and not all practitioners offer this service.

How to access telephone telehealth

There are two types of a telehealth service using a telephone.

-  **Consultation with your healthcare provider:** A healthcare provider may consult with you over the phone. Individual healthcare providers can advise if they provide this service.
-  **Telephone helpline:** There are a number of telephone helplines you can call to find non-urgent health advice and information.

Telephone telehealth services



- The **healthdirect** helpline (**1800 022 222**) is a government funded service staffed by registered nurses and is in all Australian states and territories except Queensland and Victoria. **healthdirect** also provide an after-hours GP service which is accessed from the same phone number.
- If you are in Queensland, you can call the **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** helpline.
- If you are in Victoria, you can call the **NURSE-ON-CALL** helpline on **1300 60 60 24**.
- All of these services are **FREE** of charge and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A guide for consumers and patients continued...



How to access telehealth video conferencing services

- 1 If you have an outpatient appointment at a hospital, call the hospital and ask if your appointment can be done by telehealth.
- 2 If you need to see a GP, private specialist, or allied health practitioner, call your regular healthcare provider, if you have one, and ask if they offer telehealth appointments.
- 3 Use the Australian Government's **healthdirect** website (www.healthdirect.gov.au/) to find a GP or allied health professional who provides video conferencing.
 - Click on the "Service finder" tab
 - Select the type of consultation needed
 - Click on "Telehealth capable"
 - Enter your location



TIP! If no services are found in your local area try using a postcode for a larger metropolitan area because with telehealth healthcare providers do not need to be local.

- 4 Search the Internet for an online provider using terms such as "online doctor Australia" or "online psychologist Australia". Be aware there will be out-of-pocket costs for many of these services.



Telehealth in real life

"Telehealth is working. My child is doing speech therapy via Zoom. My doctor rang me last week to give me results of regular blood tests, adjusted dosages of drugs and then e-scripted to my local pharmacy. They told me not to come to clinic to avoid any illness. Got enough already."

Consumer

"Today, scores of doctors, therapists and healthcare professionals are springing into their first #telehealth encounters.

It is one of the biggest paradigm shifts in medicine - we don't need to touch a patient to offer care. In the end, it is about connection."

Doctor

"I just had my first telehealth consultation with my GP regarding an ongoing health problem. What would have normally been a 1.5 hour round trip including waiting time was only three minutes!"

Consumer