

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY ONLINE

A guide for health professionals



STEP 1: Before your first video conference

- ✓ Learn how to test the audio and video on your video conference platform.
- ✓ Practise video conferencing with your colleagues before consulting with a patient. Continue to practise until you feel comfortable. This practice should emulate a real consultation so you can work out how best to get all information needed to conduct the consultation effectively.
- ✓ Consider if you need the patient to be accompanied by a family member or local clinician.
- ✓ Consider what information can be collected before the video conference.
- ✓ There is a steep learning curve with video conferencing. So initially use it only for simple consultations and schedule longer appointment times.
- ✓ Acknowledge you will feel uncomfortable when starting out.
- ✓ Not all patients or all types of consultations will be amenable to telehealth. Therefore you should pre-determine what kind of appointments are appropriate for video or telephone consultation. As you become more practised with telehealth, it is likely the range and acuity of patient you can manage with telehealth will broaden.
- ✓ Establish a process for patients to do a test connection prior to their appointment.

STEP 2: Preparing for a video consultation

- Test your audio and video is working before connecting to the video conference. If you are using a headset, test that it is working.
- Adjust your camera so you are framed head-and-shoulders in camera view.
- Increase your privacy and reduce unwanted noise by closing windows and doors. Put a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door.
- Have your patient’s phone number at hand.

STEP 3: Communicating online

- Speak slightly slower than you would in normal conversation.
- Take care not talk over the top of other participants. Pause after speaking and be conscious of taking turns.
- Avoid excessive movement which can interfere with consistent audio volume.
- Inform your patient if you need to look away from the screen (e.g. to look up information).

STEP 4: At the start of the video consultation

- ✓ Introduce yourself.
- ✓ Ask if your patient can hear and see you.
- ✓ Have the patient confirm their name.
- ✓ Inform your patient that if there is anyone in the room, they must move into camera view or leave the room.
- ✓ Inform your patient you will phone them if there are any technical difficulties during the consultation. Confirm the phone number you have is correct.
- ✓ Prepare your patient before you begin the consultation to ensure a good interaction will ensue. If necessary, ask them to adjust their camera, re-position themselves or the person accompanying them, turn on the light, or close curtains behind them.
- ✓ Once you are satisfied that you can communicate effectively, begin the consultation.

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