

Telehealth Information for Patients

Q. Will I have to remove my clothes during the exam?

Generally no, but depending on the reason you are having the visit, you may need to allow a visual exam of certain parts of your body. For example, if you have a rash on your abdomen, your provider may ask you to focus on that rash so that it can be examined.

Q. Is the visit private and/or is this visit compliant with privacy laws?

Your provider should inform you of any risks and limitations around privacy and security regarding your telehealth visit. Privacy compliance goes beyond technology and also applies to provider and patient behaviors. If there is any concern that your provider is not in a private location, make sure you ask if your conversation can be overheard or if there is anyone else in the room with your provider. Similarly, if you are not in a private location and you have other family members or individuals who can see or hear the interaction, you have the responsibility to inform your provider.

Q. Will this visit be covered by my insurance?

Medicare, NC Medicaid, NC BCBS and the State Health Plan now cover telehealth visits. If you aren't sure or have another health insurance plan, please contact your insurance carrier for more information.

Q. How much does this cost me?

If you have insurance, most are waiving co-pays during this COVID-19 pandemic. If in doubt, you should check with your insurance carrier before your visit. There are some telehealth providers who simply charge a flat fee for the visit and expect that to be paid up front. In those cases, you would need to file your own claim with your insurance company. Your provider should disclose this information up front. If not, be sure to ask.

Q. If I need lab tests, how will you order them?

This is no difference than if you had an office visit. If your provider will need you to obtain lab tests, he/she should provide you with instructions.

Q. Can I still get medications?

Yes. However, this is dependent on your condition and your current circumstances. Your provider will decide the right treatment to use based on information in your medical record and health history, whether your provider is able to obtain enough information during your telehealth visit to deliver a diagnosis, and whether the medication is considered a "controlled substance" or not.

Q. How will you tell if I am sick if you can't take my temperature, weight, blood pressure etc.?

If your provider has not provided you with a medical device that connects directly with their office, they may ask to observe you with taking your own temperature, weight, etc. (provided you have the necessary tools at home to do so). Your provider should discuss limitations around the visit (access to lab tests, medical devices, internet bandwidth and its impact on the quality of audio/video). The standard of care should not change because your visit is being done virtually. If your clinician does not have sufficient information to adequately assess your condition, he/she will need to let you know and may refer you to get in-person care.

Q. Will I be able to hear you?

You should be able to hear your provider. If you cannot, you need to let your provider know. If you experience bad sound quality, sometimes, you just need to adjust your speakers or volume on your phone or computer. You may need to disconnect from the visit and reconnect. You may need to move to another location in the house that has a better wi-fi signal as that may also improve the quality of the audio-video.

Q. What happens if we get disconnected during our visit?

Your provider should let you know his/her expectations if the connection is lost. If this is not discussed at the start of your visit, you should ask.

Q. What technology do I need to schedule a virtual visit?

Typically, any device that has the capacity for an audio/video connection, is connected to the Internet or a cellular data plan should work. This includes smart phones, tablets, or computers with webcams.

Q. Can family members join me during my virtual visit?

With your permission, yes. However, you need to let your provider know who is in the room with you. Your provider is obligated to note in your record when anyone joins the visit.

Q. I am not good at technology and email; I don't think I can do a virtual visit. Will this work for me? Most of the time, a virtual visit does not require any kind of technical expertise. If you have issues, your provider or someone on his/her staff may be able to get on the phone with you and guide you through the connection.