

COVID-19 Information Updates

Tips on Using Telehealth

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The Australian Government has recognised that we will all need to actively manage our health during COVID-19, but that safety and social distancing/isolation requirements make attending face-to-face appointments more difficult. In response the Government has increased its support for telehealth appointments during COVID-19 to encourage safe, flexible and accessible options for people to continue their health care.

Telehealth offers you the option to talk to your GP, specialist, allied health provider or nurse practitioner without leaving home. It is a great option for those who are vulnerable to COVID, have mobility issues and for those living in regional, rural and remote areas.

For some of us telehealth will be new, so Parkinson's Australia is providing a few handy tips to assist.

1. Making a telehealth appointment is just like making any other appointment

- You can request a telehealth appointment, or your health care provider might suggest it to you.
- Consult with your health care provider to understand whether telehealth is appropriate for the care you need, and whether you are eligible to access bulk billed services.
- Discuss with your health care provider whether you will be doing the appointment via video conference or phone.
- Make sure you have the email address or phone number you will be using for the appointment ready in case the health care provider doesn't have it.

2. How will the appointment be done?

The Government is encouraging videoconference as the preferred replacement for a face-to-face appointment, but if you can't manage this, appointments can be done over the phone too.

For a videoconference:

- You will need a device such as laptop, desktop computer, tablet (such as an iPad) or a mobile phone.
- The device will need to have a camera and you will need to have an internet connection.
- Your health care provider will tell you the program they are using.

For a phone call:

- The health care provider will ring you at the allotted time of the appointment.

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3. Getting your device ready before the appointment

- Download the program or app your health care provider is using before the time of the appointment. You will most likely use a program such as, Epic, Zoom, FaceTime, or Skype.
- Make sure you are set up in a location with a good internet connection.
- Charge your device or phone before the appointment or try to keep it plugged in.
- Set up your device so you and the health care provider can comfortably talk and see each other. At a table or desk will mean you don't have to hold the device throughout the appointment, and it will be steady.
- Avoid backlighting (like windows behind you) as this may make it difficult for the health care provider to see you.
- Limit any background noise in the room such as a TV or radio, pets, or noise from outside.
- You might want to put the phone on speaker - if its available and you can hear well. This will allow you to write notes and allow others (such as a carer) to hear if they are attending the appointment with you.
- Speak in your normal voice.

4. Getting ready for your telehealth appointment

- Make sure you have your medication list handy and check to see if you need any scripts. Having access to a 60-day supply of medication is prudent.
- Write a list of the questions you would like to ask.
- Have a pen and paper handy in case you need to write something down.
- If the health care provider has asked you to have equipment at hand (such as a thermometer) – make sure it is easily accessible from where you are sitting.
- Try to position yourself near a space where you can perform typical tasks your doctor or specialist may ask you to complete. For instance, a movement disorders specialist or physio might ask you to walk.
- It may be helpful to have a family member or a carer ready to help during the appointment.