

Telehealth for cancer patients and carers

Your cancer treatment team may be offering you appointments by phone or video instead of face-to-face. These are both types of telehealth. Find out how you can get the most out of telehealth appointments and maintain your healthcare during COVID-19.

What are the benefits?

Telehealth provides a safe way to meet during COVID-19 and can:

- enable you to continue your vital health care
- reduce your risk of getting other illnesses like colds, flu and Coronavirus. This is important if your immune system (your body's ability to fight infection) has been weakened by your cancer treatment
- avoid the need to travel to appointments
- save you money on travel and accommodation costs
- be faster if you just need a prescription or have a quick question for your treatment team

What appointments are best for telehealth?

During your cancer treatment, you will need to see various health professionals. Telehealth is best for the following types of appointments:

- follow-up care
- scan and test results
- advice on symptoms and side effects
- repeat prescriptions
- nutrition and exercise advice
- counselling

Your health professional will tell you if they need to see you in person and will make a follow-up appointment.

What do I need?



Video calls:

- a smartphone, iPad/ tablet, laptop or a computer that has a camera, microphone and speakers
- an email address or mobile phone number so they can email or text you the instructions and link.
- internet connection

Phone calls:

- a mobile phone or landline.

Note: Not all health professionals will have the technology to conduct video calls. In these situations consultations will be done via phone.

Before your telehealth appointment

Check with your health professional if you are able to see or access scan or test results.

Let your health service know if you:

- are hard of hearing
- need an interpreter



Make sure you;

- read any instructions
- have a list of questions prepared
- have the email address for your local pharmacy so if you need a prescription your doctor can email the pharmacy any prescriptions.
- have a support person attend if needed. Find a quiet place so you won't be interrupted and make sure you don't have a window or light behind you.
- do not have your mobile phone on silent
- turn your microphone on (off mute) and your camera is on if you're using a laptop or tablet (iPad)
- rest your screen on something so you don't have to hold it. This will make it easier for you to concentrate on the call and will also free your hands to write any notes. A pile of books on the kitchen table can work well.
- set up the screen so you have your face and shoulders in view
- connect a few minutes before your appointment time so you can check everything is working ok.

For information and support call our cancer nurses on 13 11 20



During the appointment:

- look at the screen
- speak slowly and clearly
- take it in turns to speak one at a time. Do not talk over each other. If you get cut off, wait for a phone call from your health professional.
- write down any instructions and what you need to do next.
- ensure you have asked all your questions.
- ask your doctor if they can share their screen with you when they are going through test or scan results.

Can I ask for a face-to-face appointment?



Yes.

You should have a face-to-face appointment if:

- it's your first time seeing the doctor
- your health professional has asked to see you in person. They will tell you how to stay safe when visiting.
- you are not getting better

Or if you:

- need a physical examination, test, treatment or scan
- do not feel comfortable using telehealth
- do not have the technology or cannot use it
- have more than one appointment at the health centre or hospital

How much will it cost?

Anyone with a Medicare card can get a rebate (money back) for telehealth appointments.

Before your appointment, we recommend asking your health service if your appointment can be bulk billed (free) and if not, what the out of pocket costs will be.

Can I have a support person with me for the appointment?



Yes. Just make sure you introduce the person to the health professional at the start of the call/ video as you would if you were meeting in person.