

Telehealth during COVID-19

- What is it and how to access it?

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What is telehealth?

Telehealth (or telemedicine) is a method to access a health professional such as your GP or hospital specialist through a phone or a video link like Facetime, Skype, Zoom and other video apps. This means you may need to talk to your health provider either by phone or via online, not face-to-face as you normally do.

What is the new COVID-19 telehealth?

The new COVID-19 telehealth is one of the Australian government's many responses to control COVID-19. It is a temporary arrangement until 30 September 2020 for people to access their health care providers by phone or a video link. Doing this can help to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 by reducing the need to leave their home to access a health care provider.

Do I have to pay for the new COVID-19 telehealth?

The service is bulk billed for patients under 16 years of age, Concession Card holders and those considered vulnerable to COVID-19 such as patients who are pregnant, or aged 70 or older, or required to self-isolate and so on, a full list can be found at www.mbsonline.gov.au. For all other people please ask your doctor/GP practice to find out if their service is bulk billed.

How do I make an appointment for the new COVID-19 telehealth?

You can make an appointment as you usually do. You can ask if the consultation can be done via telehealth and what options are available such as phone or Facetime, or other video technology, and tell them what your preferred method is.

If it is bulk billed, you will be asked if you are happy to 'assign the benefit' which means you are agreeing for Medicare to pay your health care provider directly.

Can I access the new COVID-19 telehealth for all health problems?

Telehealth is appropriate for health problems that do not usually require a physical examination such as chronic disease management including hepatitis B, C and HIV monitoring. If the patient has conditions that require the doctor to feel their abdomen, listen to their lungs or heart, have skin conditions that cannot be assessed by a photo, or procedures such as smears, swabs, injections, and vaccinations etc. a face-to-face appointment will be scheduled. You can ask your health providers at the appointment if you are not sure.

If you do need a face-to-face appointment it is best to avoid using public transport if possible, to protect yourself and your family from potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

Which health providers can I access via the new COVID-19 telehealth?

You can access a range of bulk billed telehealth health service providers including GPs, specialists, nurse practitioners, mental health providers and others. A list can be found at www.mbsonline.gov.au.

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Can I get a prescription for my medication if using telehealth?

Yes. A prescription can be posted or emailed to you or your chosen pharmacist. Also, your pharmacy may be able to arrange free home delivery through Australia Post. More information is available at <https://auspost.com.au/pharmacy-home-deliveries>.

Can I get my tests if using telehealth?

Yes. Your doctor can order a test for you such as blood tests and scans such as ultrasounds. A test request form can be posted or emailed to you, so you don't need to go to the clinic. Your doctor may call you with the results or make an appointment to discuss the results with you.

It is safe to have blood tests and other scans. Pathology collection and diagnostic services are taking appropriate precautions to protect their workers and their patients.

Can I use an interpreter if using telehealth?

YES. You can ask for an interpreter and one will be arranged and can assist on the phone or video call. All GPs and hospital specialists should be able to arrange an interpreter at no cost for a Medicare Card Holder to the patient or themselves.

Should I go to hospital for my regular appointments if I am usually seen as an hospital outpatient?

Your hospital will advise you if they are using telehealth. The doctors or nurses will call you on the phone or you may be sent a text message. It is important that you answer all calls even if it says from a **'Private Number'** or **'No Caller ID'** to make sure you receive information and do not miss an appointment. If you usually need an interpreter, one will be arranged to assist you on the telephone or face-to-face. Many hospitals are sending text messages to tell you that you will be receiving a call from the hospital.

If the doctor feels that you need further assessments, they will arrange a face-to-face appointment.

What should I do if I have chronic hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV?

It is **VERY** important that you continue your usual monitoring and treatment of hepatitis B and hepatitis C and HIV if you have these infections.

You should continue to take all prescribed medications, and you should contact the doctor or clinic if you are concerned that you may run out of medications. A prescription or appointment will be arranged for you if needed.

If you have been accessing your GP for your hepatitis B, or C or HIV care, you should continue check-ups with your GP and you may choose to do so via telehealth if it is available. Test request forms or prescriptions for medication can be sent to you by post or email after the telehealth consultation. Alternatively, you can ask your doctor to send to your chosen pharmacist directly.

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If you have been accessing your hepatitis B, or C or HIV care at a hospital, you may be able to access telehealth. You may need to check with your hospital as each hospital may have different arrangements about when and how you can access their telehealth. If you have not received information about the change from your hospital you need to go to your appointment as usual.

How can we help?

ECCQ's Hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health Program will continue to provide hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and STIS information and resources to our multicultural communities and support people living with hepatitis B or C via phone, social media and other methods if appropriate:

Website: eccq.com.au/health

Phone: 07 3844 9166

Email: health@eccq.com.au

You can also contact our staff directly who speaks your language:

Staff Name	Language we speak	Phone	Email
Angeline	French, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, English	0481 838 692	angelinem@eccq.com.au
Christine	Acholi, Juba Arabic, Swahili, English	0479 036 383	christineo@eccq.com.au
Daniel	Dinka, Arabic, Juba Arabic, English	0479 062 234	daniela@eccq.com.au
Evelyn	Burmese, English	0481 827 751	evelynp@eccq.com.au
Iqbal	Dari, English	0403 681 929	iqbalp@eccq.com.au
Lazaro	Swahili, Kirundi, English	0479 153 742	lazarok@eccq.com.au
Samantha	Chinese, English	0479 130 997	chinese@eccq.com.au
Tam	Vietnamese, English	0428 223 052	vietnamese@eccq.com.au

If you live in Cairns, you can also contact:

HIV, Viral Hepatitis, Sexual Health Coordinator

Cairns Sexual Health Service

381 Sheridan St, Cairns North, QLD, 4870

Phone: 07 4226 4760

Further information about telehealth can be found at <http://www.mbsonline.gov.au>.

Updated information about COVID-19 can be found at www.covid19.qld.gov.au

Updated information about how the Australian government helps and supports people during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found at www.australia.gov.au