

Preparing for a virtual appointment

Using technology to access your healthcare provider may be a new experience for you. You may have been offered a virtual appointment or you may have heard about it and be interested in accessing your healthcare in this way.

This guide has been designed to help you understand what virtual care is and how technology can be used to connect you with your healthcare providers using your everyday devices.

The guide includes:

What is virtual care?

Why should I use virtual care?

What happens before my appointment?

How do I access my virtual consultation?

How do I set up for a successful consultation?

What happens during the appointment?

Will my virtual appointment be private and secure?

What if I have trouble connecting?

What is virtual care?

Virtual care, also known as telehealth, safely connects people with health professionals to deliver care when and where it is needed. Telephone, video conferencing, and remote monitoring are examples of virtual care.

Virtual care is designed to complement existing in-person services, connecting you with your clinicians and providing you with more choice about how and where you receive care. If virtual care is the right option for you, your healthcare providers will explain how virtual care can be used to ensure it meets your needs.

Using technology offers another way for you to access care – it does not replace in-person care. Your healthcare provider may need to see you in-person for a physical assessment or to provide treatment, such as dressing a wound. Sometimes this can be done with another healthcare provider, for example your GP or a nurse may come to your home to provide in-person care whilst a specialist connects to you using technology.

There are many ways to provide care, your healthcare provider will discuss with you how they can provide timely high-quality care that meets your needs.

Why should I use virtual care?

Virtual care offers many benefits and can make it easier and more convenient for you to attend appointments. This may mean:

- your travel and accommodation costs are reduced
- there is less disruption to your life (family, work, daily routine)
- you can bring together different people involved in your care.

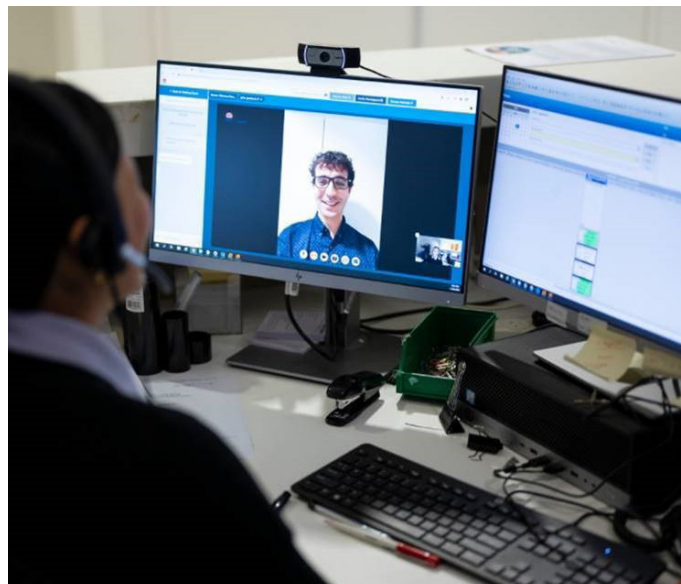
Your treating team will discuss options with you and identify the best approach based on your healthcare needs. Where you need to have multiple appointments, people may choose to access their care differently for each one: sometimes virtually and other times in-person. In many cases it comes down to your choice.

What happens before my appointment?

If you and your healthcare provider decide that virtual care is the right option, you will be provided with information about how to proceed. Just like an in-person appointment, you will be given all the details you need before the appointment, including:

- the date and time
- where you need to go (if it is not at home, for example joining from your GP clinic)
- who will be there during your appointment
- how to connect to and use the technology.

If you have concerns about your virtual appointment, you should speak to your healthcare provider.



How do I access my virtual consultation?

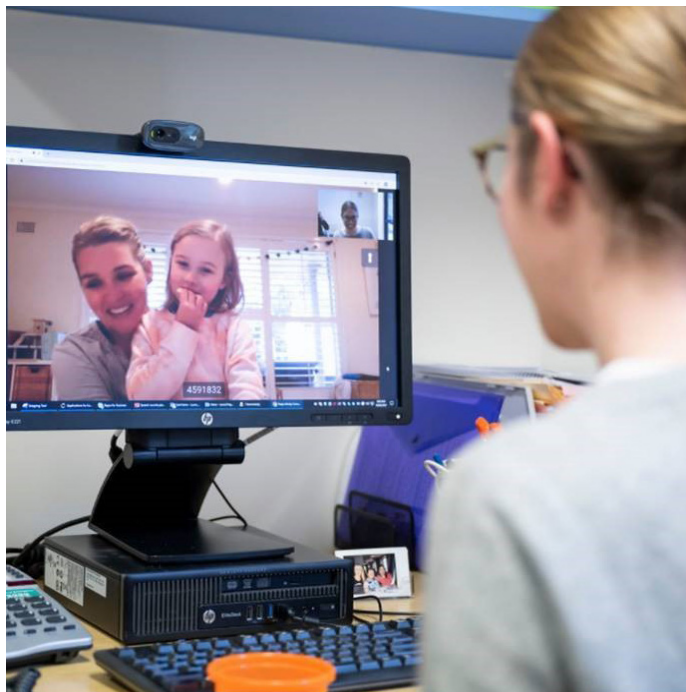
Your clinic will provide you with specific information on how to connect to your appointment, in most cases you can attend virtually using:

- a desktop or laptop computer (PC or Mac) with an internet browser
- a device such as smartphone (mobile) or tablet. Both Apple and Android devices are suitable.

You may be able to attend from your GP clinic or a NSW health facility near you – speak to your clinic to find out if this is an option for you.

There will not be any additional costs to use virtual care, except for your internet or phone usage. A 15-minute consultation uses approximately 80 megabytes (Mb) of your data allowance.

It is recommended that you conduct a test call to identify and resolve any connection issues before the appointment. Your clinic contact can provide support with this.



How do I set up for a successful consultation?

Remember that a virtual appointment (by phone or video) is still an appointment with your healthcare provider. To help ensure a successful appointment:

- test your internet connection, if you have a poor internet connection it will result in poor sound, a time delay or have pixelated images. It's a good idea to test before the appointment so other options can be discussed and arranged.
- find a private and quiet space that is free from distractions. It is important that you will not be disturbed and feel comfortable to speak with your healthcare provider. Please don't connect from a public space.

- choose a well-lit area for your appointment. Don't sit with your back to a window as the light can flood the camera, making it hard to see you.
- if you will be joining using your phone, consider switching it to 'do not disturb' so that incoming phone calls do not distract you.
- set up your device so it is stable and at eye level. You will have a more comfortable appointment experience if you don't have to hold your device.
- be on time for your appointment. Try to dial in five minutes early to allow time to address any technical issues and be comfortable.

What happens during the appointment?

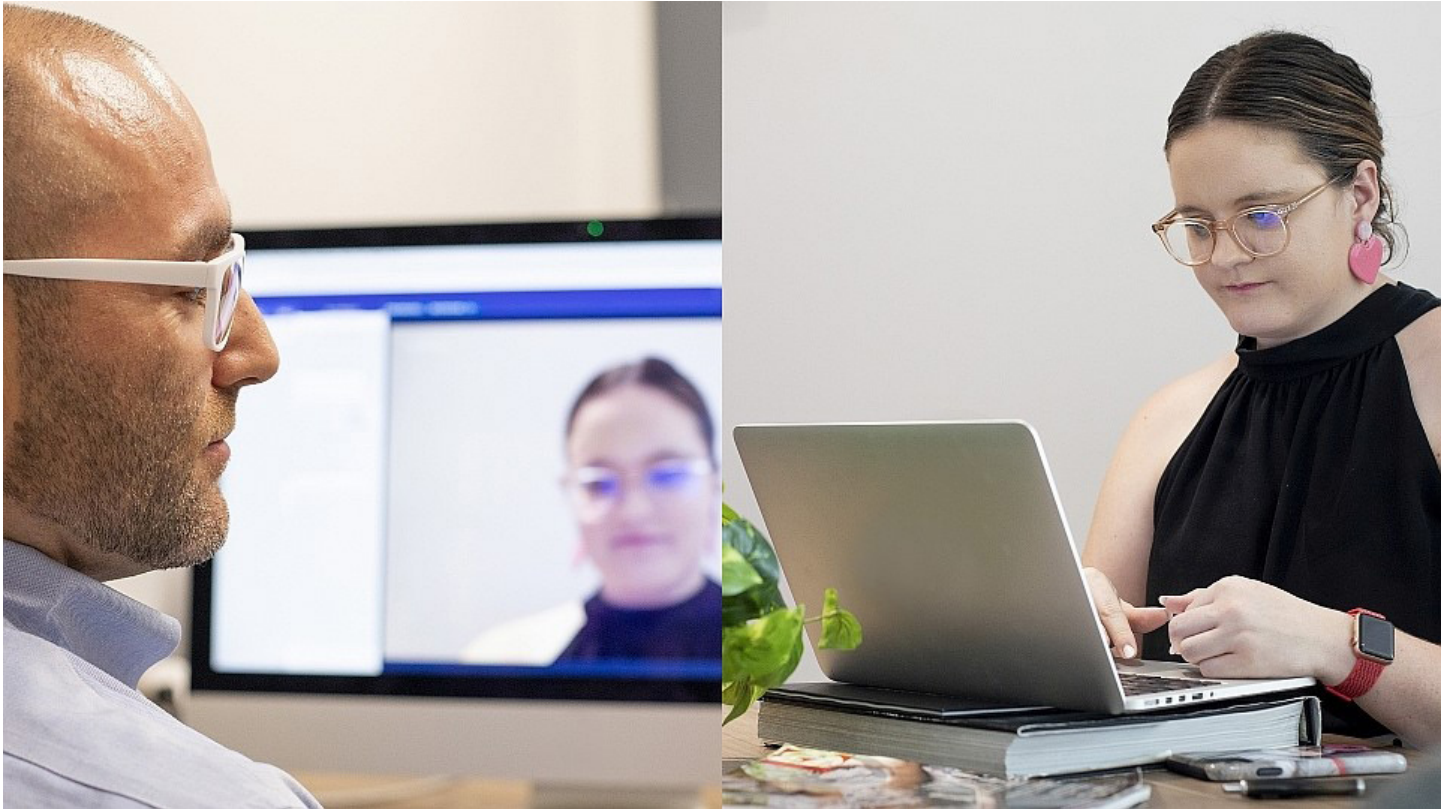
Your appointment will run like an in-person consultation. At the beginning of the appointment, all healthcare providers who are taking part will introduce themselves.

If there is a healthcare provider with you in the room, they will set up the technology for you (such as a video camera, TV or computer, microphone).

You may want a family member or support person to attend as well. They can either join with you in the same room, or from another location using their own device.

You can ask questions at any time before, during and after the appointment.

If you are having trouble hearing or change your mind and would prefer to attend the clinic, let your healthcare provider know. You will not be disadvantaged in any way and a new appointment will be booked for you.



Will my virtual appointment be private and secure?

To ensure that your consultation remains confidential and your privacy is protected, it will occur on a secure platform that meets NSW Health standards for privacy.

Your healthcare provider will manage your information in the same way as an in-person appointment. This means notes will be documented in your medical record and a letter may be sent to another provider.

Your virtual appointment will not be recorded. Recording a consultation without the consent of the people involved is an offence.

What if I have trouble connecting?

You should test your equipment a few days before your appointment. If you have any issues connecting, you should contact the service that you made the appointment with or refer to the specific instructions that your clinic provided you.

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please call the service to cancel and reschedule it. Doing this as early as possible will allow another person to access this time for their healthcare needs.