

Frequently Asked Questions about Telemedicine: A Patient's Guide

What is telemedicine?

Telemedicine is the delivery of health care services and health care related information using equipment that can allow for communication between patients and healthcare providers and even healthcare providers exchanging information to provide better access to healthcare services. This work is done using technology like internet, satellite, iPhones, or smart phones. The use of telemedicine services can take place in many situations, including hospitals, clinics, homes and nursing facilities, just to name a few.

Why Should I use Telemedicine?

It is not always easy or convenient for patients to get help for their health care needs. The purpose of telemedicine is to improve the opportunity to get healthcare closer to home, in a convenient location, and more timely way. Telemedicine is another option for receiving care from a provider. The benefit of telemedicine is less waiting and travel time, and time away from work or other priorities. Examples of telemedicine include a video "chat" for mental health care, evaluation of a sick child by video, or taking a picture of a skin problem and sending it to a skin specialist for assessment. [weblink to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9oC8vUjqk8>]

What is the distinction between telemedicine and telehealth?

The American Telemedicine Association (ATA) uses the terms "telemedicine" and "telehealth" interchangeably. Whether using the term "telemedicine" or "telehealth", both terms can refer to the use of technology to deliver healthcare services convenient to you, the patient.

How common is telemedicine?

Around the world, millions of patients use telemedicine to monitor their vital signs, remain healthy and out of hospitals and emergency rooms. Over half of all Washington hospitals and many clinics now use some form of telemedicine. Patients and providers can download health and wellness applications for use on their cell phones to assist in telemedicine. Many employers now offer telemedicine as an added benefit in their health insurance program.

Is telemedicine safe?

Telemedicine is a safe and an effective way to extend the delivery of health care. It may not be appropriate for ALL clinical situations and a medical professional can help you determine if telemedicine is appropriate.

Guidelines exist for telemedicine to ensure safety and quality. Clinicians are held to the same standards of care through a telemedicine visit as an in-person visit. Similarly, the

same standards for privacy and confidentiality for an in-person visit apply to telemedicine visits. For more information, you may visit this link: (<http://thesource.americantelemed.org/resources/telemedicine-practice-guidelines>)

Where can patients get access to telemedicine services?

Patients should ask their employer, health plan, hospital or healthcare provider about telemedicine services that may be available. In many cases, the provider may have access to telemedicine technology and services. There are also numerous private companies that offer basic telemedicine services, including around the clock access to a healthcare professional, remote monitoring of certain medical conditions.

Do health plans pay for telemedicine services?

Health plans, including Medicare and Medicaid, are covering a wide variety of healthcare services available through telemedicine. To find out if your health plan covers telemedicine services, please contact your health plan.

You may learn more about telemedicine by visiting

<http://www.americantelemed.org/about/telehealth-fqs->