



Virtual Options for Healthcare

What is Virtual Care?

There are times when it is important to reduce visits to medical offices, clinics or hospitals. The COVID-19 pandemic is one of them. “Virtual Care” can lower the risk of exposure to the virus.

You have an upcoming appointment with [NAME OF PROVIDER] scheduled in the [CLINIC NAME], at [FACILITY]. The plan is to check how you are doing with [REASON FOR VISIT].

Your healthcare provider would like to conduct this appointment in a way that allows you to stay where you are by using telephone or teleconferencing technology. We explain how this can work so you can decide whether and how to accept alternatives to in-person interactions.

What is different about Virtual Care?

- Virtual Care uses communication technologies such as telephone or videoconferencing to connect you with your healthcare provider. There is no cost to you for these technologies.
- Alberta Health Services (AHS) uses secure teleconferencing. Any personal or health information is used only for assessment and treatment; and other purposes specifically required by law. Your provider keeps this information confidential, in compliance with Alberta’s Health Information Act.

How to prepare for a Virtual Appointment

- You will get all the information you need about how to participate in your appointment prior to your visit, including who to contact if the chosen technology is not working for you.
- Follow any instructions provided about the communication technology to be used. In most cases, it can be tested on a device of your choice (e.g., smartphone, tablet, computer) ahead of time.
- Find a private, quiet and well-lit area so that your health care provider will be able hear and see you well, and so your conversation will not be overheard by people who should not be a part of it.
- Seek a location where you use wireless connections in order to minimize use of cellphone data.

Starting a Virtual Appointment

- You and your health care provider should confirm your identities, as well as the reason for your appointment. Also identify anyone else present, even if they can’t be seen on the screen. You may have a family member or someone else you trust present during your appointment.
- Your appointment will not be recorded unless your healthcare provider feels it should be. In that case, your healthcare provider must seek and document your permission in advance, and let you know when the recording starts and finishes.

Making the most of a Virtual Appointment

- You and your healthcare provider may talk about how you are feeling, exchange health information or education, review your treatment plan and discuss care options.
- There can be challenges associated with virtual care appointments. For example, your healthcare provider’s assessment might be limited by what they can see on screen.
- You and your provider may decide that an in-person appointment is needed to allow a more detailed assessment.
- If at any time you feel that a virtual appointment is not right for you, tell your healthcare provider. The appointment can be stopped, with alternate arrangements made for the healthcare you need.

If you have questions about Virtual Care before, during or after a virtual appointment, or if you wish to proceed with an in-person appointment, please contact [CLINIC OR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER] at [PHONE/EMAIL].