

How to Prepare for Your Virtual Visit During COVID-19

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual visits are more important now than ever before. Virtual visits are one-on-one video or phone appointments with your health care provider. These visits allow you to get medical care and guidance from the comfort of your own home.

Whether you're looking to schedule a follow-up appointment or a first-time consultation about a procedure or surgery, you can connect with your providers virtually. These specialists may include doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and others.

If you have an upcoming appointment, this article offers some tips that can help you get the most out of your virtual visit.

What Kind of Care Can You Get During a Virtual Visit?

At Brigham Health, our health care providers can help established or new patients stay on track with care that's personalized to their needs. Virtual visits are conducted through a video conference platform on Patient Gateway or Zoom, or via phone call.

During a virtual visit, your health care provider can:

- Address a new medical concern (like new symptoms or changes in your health)
- Follow up on a specific health condition
- Review or order lab work, imaging or test results
- Answer questions about a medication or therapy, order a new medication or refill a prescription
- Discuss an upcoming procedure or surgery

“Even though I'm not in the same room with patients during a virtual visit, we can still discuss medications, review concerns and come up with a care plan, and there's still a closeness to virtual meetings,” says Dale S. Adler, MD, a cardiologist at Brigham Health.

What Health Information Should I Gather Before my Virtual Visit?

If you have any health devices at home, your provider may ask you to help collect some of the following information before your visit:

- Weight (scale)
- Body temperature (thermometer)

- Blood pressure (blood pressure cuff)
- Blood glucose (glucose monitor)
- Blood oxygen saturation (finger pulse oximeter)

Prior to your virtual visit, it's helpful to prepare the following for your provider:

- **Questions:** Make a list of 3 to 5 questions that you would like to discuss with your provider. You can send a list of questions and concerns via Patient Gateway in advance of the visit.
- **Medications:** Make a list of your medications. Include the dosages and when you take them. Have them handy during your visit.
- **Signs and symptoms:** Tell your provider about any new signs or symptoms, changes in your health or new concerns. This information may include new stresses, eating habits, sleep quality and the amount of exercise you are getting.

If you're concerned about an abnormality on your body, take pictures to show your provider. For example, if you have a rash or swelling, a picture may help your doctor diagnose it properly. You can also email pictures to the clinic before your visit.

How Can I Prepare My Environment for a Virtual Visit?

To ensure a productive virtual visit, make sure to connect from a quiet space in your home with good lighting that allows your provider to see and hear you clearly. Here are some more tips to ensure your virtual visit goes smoothly:

- Contact your provider's office for any instructions to use for your virtual visit.
- Have a practice call with someone to confirm a working audio/visual connection.
- During the call, sit at a desk or table with the camera at eye level.
- Make sure your face is fully visible. Bright background lightning may make it difficult to see your face onscreen.
- Keep an arm's length away from your phone or computer.

What Should I expect During the Virtual Visit?

At the start of the virtual visit, share your key questions and concerns with your provider. This is a good time to:

- Ask your provider to explain any new test results, imaging reports or blood work.
- Review your list of medications.
- Tell your provider about any new symptoms or changes in your health.
- Point out any visible issues, such as a rash or swelling.
- Ask for clarification about a diagnosis, medication change or your treatment plan.

“At the end of a virtual visit, the most important question to have answered is whether

everyone is satisfied,” says Dr. Adler. “Can we wait for a certain time interval to meet again, or do we need testing and further examination?”

What Should I Expect After a Virtual Visit?

If needed, your provider may schedule an in-person meeting. However, to keep patients and providers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, most follow-up inpatient visits and procedures are being scheduled several months in advance. Your provider can still order blood work, medical tests and/or imaging during COVID-19.

What Should I Do if I Have a Medical Emergency?

If you have a serious health concern, call your provider right away. Your provider may arrange a visit with an urgent care provider. If you have a medical emergency, like symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, call 9-1-1 or visit the nearest emergency department. These conditions require immediate, in-person treatment.

Schedule a [virtual visit](#) with your Brigham Health provider and experience expert care from the comfort of your home.

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