

# Telehealth Frequently Asked Questions

*Note: Unless otherwise specified, within this document the word telehealth refers to video consultations.*

## Telehealth Setup

### What equipment do we need?

As a minimum, clinicians providing telehealth consultations require a device with a screen, camera, microphone and internet connection. This may include smartphones, tablets and laptops as well as more specialised telemedicine devices.

To provide a high quality, safe consultation, practices are strongly encouraged to use dedicated hardware. An example checklist may include:

- Two screens – one for video and one for documenting the consultation
- A dedicated high definition (720/1080p) webcam/camera
- A dedicated microphone and speakers or headset
- An internet connection with a minimum speed of 350kbps

For further information, see the Digital Health Toolkit.

### What software should we use?

There is no one size fits all telehealth platform, as every practice will have their own key requirements. However, it is strongly encouraged that practices use a dedicated telehealth platform rather than consumer options such as Facetime, WhatsApp or Skype.

The Commonwealth currently fund access to the HealthDirect video calling platform for all General Practices until July 2022, when the program will be reviewed.

The Digital Health Toolkit includes a summary of some of the commercial options

### How can we test our setup?

The best option is to trial the platform with colleagues both within the practice and from home. When holding a trial run, check that both parties can be seen and heard clearly and that the clinicians background is clear of distractions.

HealthDirect have a pre call test which can test the camera, microphone, speakers and network connection which can also be sent to the patient prior to the appointment. <https://vcc2.healthdirect.org.au/precall>

### What equipment does the patient need?

Whilst this may vary slightly between the different options, if using a dedicated telehealth platform, the patient will be able to use any device with a screen, camera, microphone, speakers and an active internet connection including smartphone, computer and tablet.

### Where can I provide telehealth consultations from?

Telehealth consultations are not restricted to the practice premises. Clinicians can provide these from any location, including overseas, as long as confidentiality can be maintained. However, it is recommended that consultations outside of the usual place of practice be limited to a clinicians place of residence.

# Billing and MBS

## What MBS items are there for telehealth?

Practices are encouraged to check Practice Assist for the most up to date list of telehealth items as these are regularly reviewed.

## Can we bill privately for telehealth consultations?

Yes – the bulk billing requirement for telehealth consultations was removed in October 2020

## Are there any restrictions on who we can see via telehealth?

For MBS rebates to apply, the patient must have received a face-to-face consultation with a clinician at your practice in the last 12 months. The consultation must have been with a GP, Practice Nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker for a service billed to Medicare.

The list of exemptions for this rule include:

- Patients being seen by an Aboriginal Medical Service or Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation
- Infants under 12 months old
- People experiencing homelessness
- People isolating due to a COVID-19 diagnosis or due to being a close contact
- Urgent after hours attendances during unsociable hours
- Further specific items – see Practice Assist for full details

# Using telehealth

## How does the patient access the appointment?

For most telehealth platforms, patients access the appointment via a web link sent by the practice, and do not need to download any specific software or apps. Practices will need to confirm this with their chosen platform.

## What if the clinic is running behind schedule?

Most telehealth platforms replicate the waiting room setup, meaning that they do not directly dial though to their clinician, and instead are called into the appointment when ready. It's suggested that practices consider having a member of staff available to update patients virtually if appointments times change.

## What precautions should I take before commencing a telehealth appointment?

Prior to the clinical consultation, a non-exhaustive checklist for the patient would include:

- Ensuring that sound and video are working correctly
- Introductions and checking the patient's identity
- Confirming contact details including a phone number in case of network issues
- Confirming that the patient is in a private space and is comfortable for the consultation to continue

## Can I see a patient for X issue?

The decision as to whether a telehealth consultation is based on clinical appropriateness, and therefore is made at the discretion of the clinician. This decision may involve a triage process as well as continual assessment during the consultation.

## Can I arrange for an interpreter to join the consultation?

Yes, with the patient's permission an interpreter can be invited into a telehealth consultation. The TIS provide a free service via <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/en/About-TIS-National/News/Telehealth-video-interpreting-for->

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### What if there's a poor network connection?

It's suggested that practices send a pre call test to a patient and, where time allow, check the connection before the consultation whilst the patient is in the virtual waiting room.

If the connection issues occur during the consultation, a telephone call may be used for audio alongside the videocall, or the connection can be attempted via a mobile phone network.

If the connection causes a clinical risk, arrangements should be made for a face-to-face appointment where possible.

## Further Support

Practice Assist Website:

- Digital Health Toolkit
- MBS Factsheets
- Guidance on appropriate telehealth platforms and hardware
- Checklists

Digital Health Team:

- Support with choice of platform and hardware
- Training for admin and clinicians
- Practice calls
- Q&A session

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