Telehealth and COVID-19

FAQ for California Patients

California **Telehealth** Policy Coalition

COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, is causing many patients to worry about their health. Getting an appointment to see a doctor should not add to this worry. You can get much of the care you need quickly through telehealth. Here are answers to some questions you might have about using telehealth to see your doctor.

What is telehealth?

Telehealth is a way to see your doctor through video, phone, email, and apps. Through telehealth, you can get health care without having to go to the doctor's office, for example, from your home. This is especially important during the coronavirus pandemic when the law requires us to stay at home.

How can telehealth help me right now?

You and your doctor can use telehealth to make sure you get the care you need during this time. You can find out if you need to be tested for coronavirus, and where to get tested. You can have video and phone visits with your regular doctor; watch your health issues such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease; or schedule a visit with a doctor who you don't regularly see (specialist).

Does my doctor offer telehealth?

Your doctor is probably using telehealth because of the need for us to stay at home at this time. If you are not sure if your doctor offers telehealth, call their office, or visit their website.

How do I get ready for a telehealth visit?

If you have a phone or computer, ask your doctor if you will need to download or log in to an app before your visit. If you need help getting ready for the visit, call your doctor before your visit and their team can help you.

How else can I get help without a follow-up doctor visit?

Ask your doctor if, instead of making a follow-up appointment, they can send an electronic consult to a specialist about your health needs. This may help you avoid another doctor visit.

Can I use telehealth to get tested for coronavirus or to find a place to get tested?

You may be able to use telehealth to find out where to get tested. Your doctor may need to have a phone or video visit with you first. Start by calling your doctor and asking for a telehealth visit. You can also visit your county public health website to find out where to get tested.

Does my health plan pay for telehealth?

Most California health plans will pay for telehealth during the coronavirus pandemic. First, visit your health plan's web site to learn how your doctor is using telehealth. If you have Medi-Cal and are having trouble getting a telehealth visit, call Medi-Cal's member helpline at (800) 541-5555. If you have another health plan, call the state's health plan help center at (888) 466-2219.

What laws protect me when I use telehealth?

Many patients want to know how their information will be kept safe. Your doctor must keep your information safe by following federal and state law and using telehealth in a private place and with secure technology. You can find out more about health data privacy on the Attorney General's website.

Where can I find more information from the state about testing, insurance, and coronavirus resources?

The state government has helpful information for Californians on the state response to the coronavirus pandemic and on changes made to health care coverage on its website. You can also visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website for information on the virus and how to protect yourself during this pandemic and the Department of Health and Human Services' website for information on telehealth.