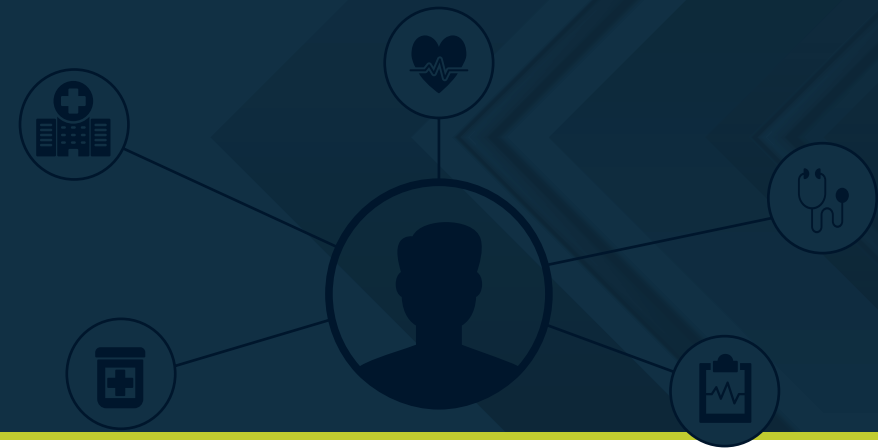


INTERACTING WITH THE HEALTH SYSTEM

When virtual health can come in handy—and how to get the most out of it



Sometimes it can be challenging and frustrating to get care right when you need it. Luckily for many folks, medical care is as close as your smartphone. Telehealth can be used for some routine scheduled visits, too.

Most employers now offer telehealth—a virtual connection to a doctor available when and where you need it. One survey found that 91% of people with employer-sponsored insurance who have used telehealth before would use it again in the future.¹

A video visit with a board-certified physician, typically on a smartphone, can be accessed in a matter of minutes for a variety of needs and almost always costs less than a trip to the doctor's office, walk-in clinic, or emergency room—on average about \$50.

When should I use a video visit with a doctor?

You're on vacation

Avoid spending half a day making your way to an urgent care. Connect with a doctor virtually, and go back to bed.

You have familiar symptoms

If you get sinus infections all the time, you know the drill. If it's not convenient to see your own doctor, you can make a video visit.

To connect with a dermatologist




Send pictures to a telemedicine doctor if you have a rash or other skin irritation.

You're not sure if you need an ER

Sometimes it's obvious that you need to go straight to the emergency room—chest pain, difficulty breathing, a bad bone break—but sometimes it's not. A virtual visit can advise you on your next move if you feel like you have the time for it. In one study, nearly one-fifth of consumers surveyed with employer-based insurance who have used telehealth said they would use it for emergency purposes.²

DID YOU KNOW?

There may be various ways you can access telehealth:

 Your health insurance plan	 Your doctor	 As a stand-alone benefit
---	--	---

You need to talk to someone for your mental health

Many telemedicine providers allow you to schedule a time to talk to a therapist. You can even schedule a follow-up with the same doctor. A recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that employees' use of mental telehealth benefits has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a public health emergency.³


You're managing a chronic condition

Research has shown that using telehealth to care for people with chronic diseases can improve medication adherence, commitment to self-management goals, and improve health outcomes.⁴

You need a follow-up appointment

One survey found that telehealth is most commonly used in doctors' offices for follow-up appointments.⁵ For example, video visits have been found to be effective for post-surgery follow-up care for certain procedures, such as orthopedic surgeries.⁶



Learn more in the
**Employee Health Benefits
Navigator** 

WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER DOING NOW?

- Check with your human resources department or search your benefits portal to find out what's available to you.
- Download the virtual health app and set up an account **before** you need it. Fill out your medical history, including any medication allergies.
- Consider buying an over-the-counter telehealth kit that includes a thermometer; pulse oximeter; blood pressure cuff; medical devices to check your throat, eyes, and ears; or other tools that may help you share more information with the doctor.
- Let your regular doctors know that you are interested in video visits if they offer them.

Additional tips

- Make sure you know what your next steps are following the visit (e.g., "Where should I go for that X-ray?"). If you don't, speak up!
- Let your telehealth doctor know whom to share your visit summary with to keep your regular doctors informed.

1. PwC Health Research Institute, Medical Cost Trend: Behind the Numbers 2022, June 2021, <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/health-industries/library/assets/pwc-hri-behind-the-numbers-2022.pdf>.

2. Ibid.

3. Nirmita Panchal, Rabah Kamal, Cynthia Cox, and Rachel Garfield, "The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use," KFF, February 10, 2021, <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>.

4. "Telehealth Interventions to Improve Chronic Disease," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed January 14, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/pubs/telehealth.htm#:~:text=Table%20%20%20%20CPSTF%20Review%20,Improvements%20in%20dietary%20outcomes%20%28e.g.%2C%20%20...%20>.

5. PwC Health Research Institute, Top Health Industry Issues of 2021: Will a Shocked System Emerge Stronger?, December 2020, <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/industries/health-industries/assets/pwc-us-health-top-health-issues-2021.pdf>.

6. Liam T. Kane et al., "The Role of Telehealth as a Platform for Postoperative Visits Following Rotator Cuff Repair: A Prospective, Randomized Controlled Trial," *Journal of Shoulder and Elbow Surgery* 29, no. 4 (April 2020): 775–83. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32197766/>.