



Telehealth Tip Sheet for Healthcare Providers

Why Telehealth?

TeleHealth can be used to reach your most vulnerable patients to provide much needed education and support during this difficult time. It can also serve to:

- Lower stress for immunocompromised patients who fear exposure
- Help patients who are self-isolating to feel less alone
- Reduce fears about the impact of COVID-19 on their health and their access to treatment

Technical Tips

1. Use a highspeed internet connection and use a wired versus wireless connection. If you're having speed issues, close unnecessary applications and windows on your computer.
2. Plug your device in to avoid running low on power.
3. Pre-test headphones/microphone quality – if at all possible, don't use computer microphone. Using headphones helps to ensure patient confidentiality and improves likelihood the patient will feel more comfortable sharing information.
4. Place your camera at eye level.
5. Close blinds or adjust lights to reduce glare.
6. Sign on early to test everything out, especially the first time.
7. Use as much direct eye contact as possible during the call if you're using video conferencing. To do so, be sure you are looking at your camera, not your patient on the screen. Most cameras are located on the top of the screen at the center. Use cues to show you are listening such as nodding from time to time.
8. Highly recommend to your patients that they use video conferencing versus phone only unless phone is the only option. Many patients feel isolated, particularly during this pandemic. Seeing you, and you seeing them, can help.
9. Have your IT department support number available in case you need assistance.
10. Follow your usual clinical protocol for patient visits including summarizing next steps for the patient at the end of the call.



FAQs to Help Your Patients Feel Less Stressed During COVID-19

Does the treatment I am taking reduce my immunity to COVID-19?

Be able to explain clearly what, if any, impact current treatment has on immunity as it relates to COVID-19.

Will COVID-19 affect the availability of my treatment?

Be prepared with information on supply chain impact, if any. Have the phone number of the patient's pharmacy available and encourage them to call their pharmacist to confirm that their medication is readily available as general availability of treatments may be different than what is currently in stock with specialty pharmacies.

I have a non-emergency appointment with your office coming up. Does this increase my risk of COVID-19 infection?

Provide patients with guidelines to help them understand the best avenue for appointments. Advise as to availability of in-person, benefits of telehealth appointments, implemented patient safety guidelines, and hours/protocols for operations on site should they need to come in person.

I am scheduled for a follow up visit to get my prescription/prescription refill but I'd rather not have to go out. Can I still get my prescription? If so, how?

Provide patients with strategies for prescription refills that, where possible, can be completed without an in-person visit.

I'm due for follow up screenings but I've been told they've been cancelled. Without screenings, how do I know my medication is working?

Educate patients on availability of screenings, recommendations for what is high priority and available now and what can wait longer – including why it is okay to wait. Patients will need reassurance based on evidence that it is safe to delay screenings so be prepared with data and studies that support this.

I am experiencing some side effects from my medication, but I know healthcare professionals are overwhelmed right now so I feel guilty about calling. At what point should I contact my healthcare provider?

Encourage patients to contact their healthcare team right away since early communications may help to avoid complications from side effects if left until a later date. Providing them with a form or document for tracking side effects can help them feel more empowered and give healthcare teams more accurate information to better understand frequency, triggers, duration, and impact of the side effect.

Using Open-Ended Questions to Enhance TeleHealth Patient Appointments

Open-ended questions, versus those that can be answered with yes/no, inspire and invite more interaction and engagement by the patient.

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3 Tips to For Using Open-Ended Questions:

1. **Use Active Listening.** Active listening involves not only hearing the patient’s response, but also noticing tone of voice, facial expressions/body language, choice of words, breathing rate.
2. **When asking questions, avoid ‘Why’?** Why tends to lead patients into past thinking, judgment, and blame. Instead, focus on who, what, and how. For example, instead of asking “Why didn’t you take your medication regularly”, ask, “What made it challenging for you to be able to take your medication regularly?”
3. **Rephrase.** Use “it’s normal/common/understandable” you would be _____. Avoid using “I.” For example, “It’s normal to have some fears about COVID-19.”

Sample Open-Ended Questions

What are your top concerns or questions you’d like to discuss today?

What else do you feel it would be helpful for me to know so I can best assist you?

What you’ve shared with me so far is very helpful. What else might be contributing to this challenge/situation/concern/feeling of _____?

What other questions or concerns would like to address today that we didn’t already cover?

Of the areas we covered, what would you say are the two most helpful takeaways for you?