Communicating with health care providers may be more challenging than ever in the wake of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that people stay at home as much as possible—especially those that may be more susceptible to the severe symptoms of COVID-19, such as older adults or those with some types of chronic medical conditions. Despite the current circumstances, virtual visits may be an option for you or your loved one to communicate with a health care provider using a variety of common telemedicine websites/apps such as Teladoc, Doctor On Demand, MDLive, Doxy.me, and Amwell. Check with your health care provider and insurance to see if telemedicine is an option for you. The following guide offers suggestions for how patients and their caregivers may communicate with providers through telemedicine.

What is telemedicine?
According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), “Telehealth, telemedicine, and related terms generally refer to the exchange of medical information from one site to another through electronic communication to improve a patient’s health.” It is important to know that telemedicine visits—including video calls—are not recorded and instead simply allow your health care provider to communicate with you from a distance.

What sort of technology can be used for telemedicine?
If your health care provider conducts telemedicine virtual visits, you may need the following options:

Methods of Communication:

- Telephone
- Video calls (eg, FaceTime, Skype)
- Secure email
- Secure text messaging
- Patient portal
- Social media private communications (eg, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts)

- A virtual visit can only happen if it is private and not public facing (eg, NOT through using Facebook Live or Stories, or a post on your profile or news feed)

This Simple Guide to Navigating Telemedicine for Patients and Caregivers is for general informational purposes only and is not exhaustive. This Guide is not intended to be a substitute for reviewing information available from your insurance company, treating health care provider, or relevant public health authorities, including the CDC. It is not medical advice. Patients and caregivers should always consult their health care provider to learn about available telemedicine options and regarding individual health care and treatment decisions. ACADIA is not endorsing any specific telemedicine platforms.
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