

Communicating with your patients may be more challenging than ever in the wake of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (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.^{1,2} Despite the current circumstances, virtual visits may be an option for you to communicate with your patients using a variety of common telemedicine websites/apps such as Teladoc Health, Doctor On Demand, MDLive, Doxy.me, and Amwell.³⁻⁵ The following guide offers suggestions for how health care professionals may communicate with patients and their caregivers through telemedicine.

Depending on how you plan to conduct telemedicine virtual visits, you and your patient may need the following options:

Methods of Communication⁶⁻⁸:



Telephone



Secure email



Video calls (eg, FaceTime, Skype)



Secure text messaging



Social media private communications (eg, Facebook Messenger, Google Hangouts)



Patient portal

- 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 a profile or news feed)

Technology⁷⁻⁹:



Mobile device (smartphone or tablet) or laptop with: camera, microphone, and speaker



Video conferencing software (see examples below for Telemedicine and Communication)



High-speed broadband internet connection (cable, wireless, or mobile)

The following links are examples of telemedicine and communication platforms:

Telemedicine Platforms³⁻⁵

[Amwell](#)

[Doctor On Demand](#)

[Doxy.me](#)

[MDLive](#)

[Teladoc Health](#)

Communication Platforms^{3,4,6-8}

[Facebook Messenger](#)

[FaceTime](#)

[Skype](#)

[Zoom](#)

This Simple Guide to Navigating Telemedicine is for general informational purposes only and is not exhaustive. Rules around telemedicine may vary state to state and payer to payer, including that telemedicine may not be permitted in some circumstances or by some payers. This Guide is not intended to be a substitute for reviewing information available from state licensing authorities, applicable payers and insurance companies, and relevant public health authorities, including the CDC. Health care professionals should consult applicable licensing authorities and payer/insurance requirements to learn more about permissible telemedicine options and any special requirements. ACADIA is not endorsing any specific telemedicine platforms.

Suggestions to prepare for a telemedicine appointment:



Preparation⁹:

- After explaining how telemedicine works, obtain patient consent to conduct a telemedicine appointment
- Review the patient's chart prior to the appointment and note anything you plan to discuss
- Ensure contact information for your patient is available in case of technology problems



Setup^{3,9}:

- Log in early so you have time to test your technology
- Ensure your device is charged or plugged in
- Adjust your camera so it is as close to eye level as possible
- Pick a quiet location with good lighting, and if possible, a plain background
- Use two factors to verify a patient's identity
- Look at your notes then speak to the camera as if looking at your patient's face
- Summarize your next steps at the end of the appointment

Recent update to telemedicine coverage: In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has broadened access to telemedicine services so Medicare beneficiaries can receive a wider range of services from health care professionals without having to travel to a health care facility.⁶ Covered telemedicine services also may include virtual check-ins and e-Visits.⁶ Please review the [MEDICARE TELEMEDICINE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER FACT SHEET](#) for specific rules, terms, and information regarding these covered services.

Additional resources

<https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/resources/>

MDS telemedicine guidelines: <https://www.movementdisorders.org/MDS/About/Committees--Other-Groups/Telemedicine-in-Your-Movement-Disorders-Practice-A-Step-by-Step-Guide.htm>

AAN Telemedicine and Remote Care: <https://www.aan.com/tools-and-resources/practicing-neurologists-administrators/telemedicine-and-remote-care/>

CMS Telemedicine Toolkit: <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/general-telemedicine-toolkit.pdf>

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Get your home ready. Updated March 25, 2020. Accessed April 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19_FAQ_HouseholdReady-H.pdf 2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): older adults. Updated April 2020. Accessed April 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/older-adults.html> 3. American Academy of Neurology. Telemedicine and COVID-19 implementation guide. Updated April 10, 2020. Accessed April 2020. <https://www.aan.com/siteassets/home-page/tools-and-resources/practicing-neurologist-administrators/telemedicine-and-remote-care/20-telemedicine-and-covid19-v103.pdf> 4. Texas Medical Association. Telemedicine vendor options. Updated April 2020. Accessed April 2020. https://www.texmed.org/uploadedFiles/Current/2016_Practice_Help/Health_Information_Technology/Telemedicine/Telemedicine%20Vendor%20Options.pdf 5. Consumer Technology Association and American Telemedicine Association. Digital health directory. Accessed April 27, 2020. <https://www.techhealthdirectory.com/> 6. Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Medicare telemedicine health care provider fact sheet. Updated March 17, 2020. Accessed April 2020. <https://www.cms.gov/newsroom/fact-sheets/medicare-telemedicine-health-care-provider-fact-sheet> 7. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. FAQs on telehealth and HIPAA during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. Accessed April 27, 2020. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/telehealth-faqs-508.pdf> 8. Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. COVID-19 frequently asked questions (FAQs) on Medicare fee-for-service (FFS) billing. Updated March 9, 2020. Accessed April 17, 2020. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/03092020-covid-19-faqs-508.pdf> 9. Movement Disorder Society. Telemedicine in your movement disorder practice: a step-by-step guide. Accessed April 2020. <https://www.movementdisorders.org/MDS/About/Committees--Other-Groups/Telemedicine-in-Your-Movement-Disorders-Practice-A-Step-by-Step-Guide/Step-1-Obtain-Necessary-Equipment-and-Software-Equipment.htm>

This Simple Guide to Navigating Telemedicine is for general informational purposes only and is not exhaustive. Rules around telemedicine may vary state to state and payer to payer, including that telemedicine may not be permitted in some circumstances or by some payers. This Guide is not intended to be a substitute for reviewing information available from state licensing authorities, applicable payers and insurance companies, and relevant public health authorities, including the CDC. Health care professionals should consult applicable licensing authorities and payer/insurance requirements to learn more about permissible telemedicine options and any special requirements. ACADIA is not endorsing any specific telemedicine platforms.