

General FAQs on Virtual Care

Photographs

Q. Can you upload photographs to the EMR?

- Yes, photographs can be uploaded to Med Access through the Med Access mobile app.
- All instructions for the mobile app and uploading photographs can be found in the Telus Help – Importing Documents.
- eDOCSNL is preparing a summary and workflow for uploading photographs that will be posted on <https://edocsnl.ca/resources/>

Remote Patient Monitoring

Q. Can the Sat monitors being used by the home monitoring program be distributed to some key patients and allowing us to real time access data?

- The Remote Monitoring Program will be monitoring patients with COVID-19 at home who are at high risk for poor outcomes. This will include temperature measurement, O2 sats and BP, plus symptom questions.
- Nurse practitioners will be attached to the program and there will be a connection to the assessment clinic for COVID-19.
- Physicians wanting real time access to the data about their patients should contact RPM@easternhealth.ca to discuss access to the Health Harmony dashboard.
- The RMP will still accept referrals for patients with COPD, CHF and Diabetes on a case by case basis dependent upon the capacity of the program to meet the needs of patients with COVID-19.
- For more details see: <http://www.easternhealth.ca/OurCommunity.aspx?d=2&id=2273&p=1487>.

There are several companies that offer tools for physicians to use for remote patient monitoring. Cloud DX (<https://www.cloudDX.com/covid-19/action/>) had a booth at the 2019 NLMA Virtual Care Summit.

Determining Appropriate Patients for Virtual Care

Q. How do I determine which patients are appropriate for virtual care?

Not all patient appointments are appropriate for virtual care.

In practical terms, you can safely use virtual care to:

- assess and treat mental health issues
- assess and treat many skin problems (photos submitted in advance provide resolution that is much better than the resolution of even a high-quality video camera)
- assess and treat urinary, sinus and minor skin infections (pharyngitis too if you can arrange throat swabs)
- provide sexual health care, including screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and hormonal contraception
- provide travel medicine

- assess and treat conditions monitored with home devices and/or lab tests (e.g., hypertension, lipid management, thyroid conditions and some diabetes care; in-person consultations will still be needed for some exam elements)
- review lab, imaging and specialist reports
- conduct any other assessments that do not require palpation or auscultation

In contrast, the problems that are currently not amenable to virtual care include any new and significant emergency symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath and loss of neurologic function. They also include:

- ear pain, cough, abdominal/gastrointestinal symptoms, musculoskeletal injuries or conditions, most neurological
- symptoms and congestive heart failure.

This is the list of the most common types of appointments that are suitable for virtual care:

- Allergies
- Arthritic Pain
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Colds and Flu
- Diarrhea
- Infections
- Insect Bites
- Pharyngitis
- Conjunctivitis
- Rashes
- Respiratory Infections
- Sinusitis
- Skin Inflammations
- Cellulitis
- Sore Throats
- Sprains & Strains
- Bladder Infections
- UTIs
- Sports Injuries
- Vomiting

Q. Can a physical exam be done remotely?

It is not possible to conduct a full physical exam using a telephone or video visit. Asking a patient questions may eliminate the need to do a full exam. Professional judgment is required in these interactions.

- Use virtual care tools to avoid unnecessary trips to the office
- Manage chronic disease
- Managing other acute illness that may not require a physical exam

Other Questions

Q. Can we treat patients who are out of province or out of the country?

Both the patient and the physician must be located within the province.

Q. If I use my cell phone to contact patients (e.g., text), how do I ensure they don't start contacting me randomly afterward?

Physicians who have used texting with their patients have reported that there has been no abuse by patients. Several videoconferencing tools include secure messaging that allows physicians to communicate with their patients without revealing their telephone numbers or private email addresses.

Telephone calls can be shown as "Private Number" through Settings on the cell phone or through processes available through the cell phone provider. There are third party applications that allow you to send texts anonymously but there has been no testing of the security or reliability of these American services.