

mcp newsletter

March 25, 2020

20-02

TO: ALL FEE-FOR-SERVICE PHYSICIANS

RE: PANDEMIC VIRTUAL CARE ASSESSMENT

In consultation with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, the Department of Health and Community Services is introducing a temporary new Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment fee code. This temporary fee code is for direct patient care provided by physicians over the telephone or patient videoconferencing. This enables greater access for patients while abiding by the social distancing advisory and provides for a safer workplace for staff and physicians in health care clinics. This fee code is retroactive to March 18, 2020, which is the day the Public Health Emergency was declared. The fee code will remain in effect until July 1, 2020 or whenever the Department of Health and Community Services deems pandemic health care delivery no longer necessary. This fee code is only available during the timeframe indicated, in order to adhere to public health measures. Use of the Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment fee code is not restricted to diagnoses specific to COVID-19.

For further clarity, Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments include both telephone services and videoconferencing. A Pandemic Virtual Care assessment (telephone or videoconferencing) is intended to provide an alternative to an in-office visit; as such, an office visit may not be claimed within 24 hours following a claimed virtual care assessment. However, where an in-person service is deemed medically necessary within 24 hours of a virtual care assessment, the medical practitioner should submit a claim to MCP for independent consideration with appropriate substantiating information as per section 4.3.1 of the Medical Payment Schedule.

It is recommended that physicians wishing to provide patient videoconferencing use the CISCO Jabber application, which is available to physicians at no cost through the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI). CISCO Jabber has been rigorously evaluated by NLCHI, and meets acceptable standards of privacy and security. NLCHI offers full technical support and training for physicians using CISCO Jabber. Please see the Virtual Care: COVID-19 Guide below. This guide includes a link to an intake form to sign up for virtual care using CISCO Jabber. Physicians using other videoconferencing platforms can also bill MCP for Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments. However, these solutions will not be supported by NLCHI. NLCHI can be contacted directly at info@telehealth.nlchi.nl.ca or 1-877-752-6006.

Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments may only be claimed when the service is provided directly by the claiming physician and cannot be claimed for communications between health care providers. Both provider and patient may meet virtually in a physical location of their choosing as long as both the provider and patient are located within

Newfoundland and Labrador. In-person visits are required when physical examination is necessary and cannot be adequately conducted using virtual means.

Patients cannot be charged for any aspect of a publicly-funded virtual care assessment.

50000 Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment (telephone or patient videoconferencing)
..... \$42.00

Notes:

- 1) Record requirements:
 - a) documentation must meet the minimum requirements for a visit as stated in the MCP Medical Payment Schedule preamble section 4.2.2 with the exception of physical examination documentation.
 - b) the record of service must include the patient's telephone number if contact is made by phone.
 - c) the record of service must contain the start and stop times of the patient encounter.
 - d) patient consent for a Virtual Care Assessment must be documented on the medical record. Consent may be provided verbally and does not require a signature from the patient. The document below contains a link outlining considerations for providers offering virtual care, including obtaining consent for the virtual care assessment.
- 2) Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments cannot be billed with any other service codes. No add-ons or premiums can be billed in addition to this fee code. There can be no overlapping services for this fee code or any other service billed by the physician.
- 3) Assessments requiring physical examination are not eligible for billing Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment.
- 4) This service cannot be delegated by the physician. It must be direct physician to patient contact in real time.
- 5) There is a maximum of one Patient Virtual Care Assessment per patient per day. If more than one virtual assessment is medically necessary, physicians should submit records for independent consideration as per section 4.3.1 of the Medical Payment Schedule.
- 6) This fee is not payable for prescription renewals, notification of normal test results, or notification of office, referral or other appointments or other administrative tasks.
- 7) This fee is not payable to physicians who are working under salary, service contract, APP or sessional arrangements.
- 8) There is a daily limit of 40 units of virtual care assessments per physician per day. Physicians billing this fee code in excess of this amount will have the billings recovered.

Questions relating to the content of this Newsletter should be directed to Dr. Colleen Crowther, Assistant Medical Director at (709) 758-1557 or by email at colleencrowther@gov.nl.ca

VIRTUAL CARE: COVID-19 GUIDE

Expanding Private and Secure Virtual Care Across NL

Virtual care enables access to services and promotes patient and provider safety while social distancing efforts are underway. Virtual care options are available to health care providers in the Regional Health Authorities and those in community practices.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PROVIDERS?



To sign up for virtual care using CISCO Jabber, please [click here](#) to complete and submit the intake form.



When the form is submitted, someone from the program will contact you to help set up the CISCO Jabber software and ensure that you are ready to offer virtual appointments.



Virtual appointments are eligible for payment through MCP if you are a fee-for-service physician.



Training and education materials are available [here](#).



Health care providers should have an initial conversation with the patient to confirm virtual care is appropriate. Click [here](#) for more details on this process and information about patient consent.



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PATIENTS?



There is no cost to the patient for virtual appointments, as long as they have a valid MCP.



Patients will require a personal email address and access to a device (computer, tablet, or mobile phone) with a camera, speaker, and internet connection. Patients can test their device, browser and internet connection [here](#).



Patients will receive an email invitation (with unique appointment link) when an appointment is scheduled.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Provincial Telehealth Program

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's COVID-19 website