

Understanding Virtual Care: The Benefits and Considerations



The Benefits of Virtual Care

As virtual medical appointments become more common, Canadians' experiences have highlighted some key benefits you can look forward to with virtual care:



Increased Access to Care

Virtual appointments allow you to interact with health care providers (e.g., specialists) that might have been inaccessible in the past due to distance or availability.



Time and Money Savings

Attending an appointment from a location of your preference (e.g., home, work) can save you time and money from the reduced need to travel and take time off from work or other responsibilities. In 2019, virtual care saved Canadians 11.5 million hours and \$595 million in avoided travel costs¹.



Reduced Risk of Disease Transmission

Seeing a health care provider virtually can protect you from being exposed to potential viruses or other illnesses found in hospitals and clinics.



Your Family's Presence

Virtual appointments make it easier for you to have support from your family or other important people (e.g., home care staff, social worker), as less travel is required on their part, and they can join the appointment from wherever is most convenient.



More Convenient Support

Meeting with your health care provider virtually can improve support and convenience, especially if you have a chronic condition.



What to Consider when using Virtual Care

Canadians' experiences with virtual care have shown that they also come with a few key considerations.



Some Health Needs Cannot be Addressed Virtually

While seeing health care providers virtually is convenient, some health needs and conditions require in-person examinations, so virtual appointments may not be suitable in all cases.

See the [patient guide](#) from the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) for conditions that are suitable / not suitable for virtual care.



Comfort with Technology and Technical Issues

Technology might pose challenges for new users, and come with potential technical issues (e.g., losing connection, device running out of battery). Please see our [tips](#) on setting up your technology for a virtual appointment.



Privacy

There is a perception that communicating with a health care provider online may expose you to more privacy risks (as is the case with any online interaction) compared to an in-person appointment. Health care providers are required by provincial and territorial privacy legislation to use safeguards to minimize these risks. Learn more about privacy legislation across Canada [here](#). Additionally, you can take steps to protect your privacy. These include finding a private place where people can't overhear your conversation, using headphones during the appointment and keeping your passwords safe.

References - Statistics:

1. Canada Health Infoway - [Analysis of the current and potential benefits of virtual care in Canada](#)

References - Benefits:

- Ontario Telehealth Network: [Virtual Doctor Appointments | eVisit for Patients - OTN.ca](#)
- Government of Quebec: [Telehealth | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#)
- eHealth Saskatchewan: [Residents Telehealth \(ehealthsask.ca\)](#)
- Nova Scotia Health: [virtual_care_patient_information_guide_2.pdf \(nshealth.ca\)](#)

References - Considerations:

- Government of Alberta: [Learning About Virtual Care \(alberta.ca\)](#)
- Nova Scotia Health: [virtual_care_patient_information_guide_2.pdf \(nshealth.ca\)](#)
- eHealth Saskatchewan: [Residents Telehealth \(ehealthsask.ca\)](#)
- Canadian Medical Association (CMA): [Microsoft Word - Patient Virtual Care Guide_e04B.docx \(cma.ca\)](#)
- Mayo Clinic: [Telehealth: Technology meets health care - Mayo Clinic](#)

