

Virtual Appointments: A Guide for Patients and Families

What is a virtual appointment?

A [virtual appointment](#) is a video/audio call connecting you to your health care provider from a personal location of your choice. It allows you to receive care, when clinically appropriate, without travelling to a clinic or hospital.

While some virtual appointments may be conducted by telephone, this guide focuses on appointments using video/audio technology.

There is no cost to Nova Scotia citizens who are covered by provincial healthcare.

How to prepare for your appointment

- Technical requirements:
 - **Personal** email address (not a work email)
 - A secure/private Wi-Fi network (public Wi-Fi is not secure) or cellular data
 - Updated browser (Chrome or Edge)
 - A fully charged computer, tablet or smartphone
 - Headphones or connected hearing aids
- Review the appointment invitation to confirm the appointment's date/time and any special instructions
- Choose a well-lit, quiet, private and comfortable location to set up your device
- Test your technology (device, internet connection, camera, microphone, speakers/headset)
- Wear clothes that will allow you to easily show any visible symptoms (wounds, rashes)
- A family member or support person can join from another location (optional)
- Have these items ready for your appointment:
 - Nova Scotia health card
 - List of medications, along with relevant medical history
 - Phone number of your health care provider or clinic
 - Questions to ask
 - Pen and paper to write down key information



Contact your health care provider or clinic if you have concerns or questions before the appointment and technical difficulties during the appointment.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- All efforts are made to ensure that video/audio technology used by Nova Scotia Health and IWK Health is private and secure.
- The video/audio technology has a chat feature which may be enabled during the appointment. It is important that you **do not type personal health information in the Chat**.
- The appointment will not be recorded without your written or verbal consent.
- Employees and physicians take all reasonable steps to protect privacy and confidentiality.
- Personal health information is governed under the [Personal Health Information Act](#) and will be handled in accordance with [Nova Scotia Health Privacy Statement](#) or [IWK Health Privacy, Confidentiality, and Access to Information](#).

Benefits of using video/audio technology

- Saves patient travel, parking and lost work time
- Increases accessibility to health care providers who might otherwise be difficult to reach due to geographic barriers
- Enables patient access to health care from a personal location of their choice
- Enables the patient to have a family member or support person attend the appointment
- Limits patient's exposure to infection or illness

Risks of using video/audio technology

- Patients' equipment, software or internet could fail
- Patients could incur data charges if device is connected to cellular instead of a secure Wi-Fi network
- Confidential conversations could be overheard if the patient is not in a private location
- Unauthorized access could occur if the patient's device does not have antivirus software installed

How patients can reduce risks

- Test equipment, internet connection, update software regularly (e.g., internet browser)
- Use a secure Wi-Fi network; public Wi-Fi is not secure
- Charge your device fully
- Don't share appointment details with others unless you want them to attend your appointment with you
- Maintain a private space to attend your appointment
- If your video isn't working during your appointment, there is phone dial-in option on your appointment invitation that can be used with a landline or cell phone.

How to join a virtual appointment using different devices

First time using the Microsoft Teams app? – You do not need to create a Teams account

Download Microsoft Teams app on a smartphone or tablet

- Open the **App Store** (iPhone/iPad) or **Google Play Store** (Android) > Type **Microsoft Teams** into the search bar > Tap **Download/Install** and wait for the app to install.

Download Microsoft Teams app on a computer

- Go to the [Microsoft Teams website](#) > Click Download for desktop button > Open the downloaded file > Follow the instructions on the screen to install.

Day of your virtual appointment

Sign out of any Microsoft Teams accounts you are currently signed into (work or personal).

Approximately 10 - 15 minutes prior to your scheduled appointment, open the virtual appointment invitation that you received from your health care provider or clinic. Make sure your app has the latest version update.

Using an Android Smartphone or Tablet

- Tap **Join Meeting with an ID**.
- Enter the meeting ID and passcode from the email invitation. Tap **Join meeting**.
- Three pop-ups will appear asking questions about your device settings (choose **don't allow** for each).
- Type your First Name and Last Initial and tap **Join now**.
- The following message will appear **Someone in the meeting should let you in soon**. Leave your microphone camera turned off until the appointment starts, wait for instructions provided by the meeting organizer before turning both on.
- Tap **Leave** when the appointment has ended.

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- Type your First Name and Last Initial and tap **Join now**.
- The following message will appear **Someone will let you in shortly**.
- Tap **Leave** when the appointment has ended.

Using an Apple Smartphone or Tablet

- Type your First Name and Last Initial and tap **Join now**.
- Three pop-ups will appear asking questions about your device settings (only **allow** access to your microphone).
- The following message will appear **"Someone in the meeting should let you in soon"**. Leave your microphone/camera turned off until the appointment starts, wait for instructions provided by the meeting organizer before turning both on.
- Tap **Leave** when the appointment has ended.

Using a computer

- A pop-up will appear **Continue on this browser or join on the Teams app**. Click **Continue on this browser**.
- A pop-up asking you to allow MS Teams to use your microphone and camera will appear.