

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 (as required):
 - 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

Download Microsoft Teams app (skip if you plan to join from a web browser)

- **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. DO NOT create a Teams account.
- **Windows computer:** Go to the [Microsoft Teams website](#) > Click **Download Microsoft Teams for Windows** > Open the downloaded file (top right corner) > Follow the instructions on the screen. DO NOT create a Teams account. You may be automatically logged into an existing Teams account (Outlook.com, work or school).

It is important that you SIGN OUT of any Teams accounts you are currently signed into (Outlook.com, work or school). If you sign in, you may not be able to join the appointment. To sign out, click your profile picture (top right of Teams app), select Sign out from the drop-down menu.

Open the email invitation that you received from your health care provider or clinic and follow instructions below:

Using an Android or Apple Smartphone or Tablet

- Tap the **Meeting Link**.
- The Name field will appear. Type your name as instructed by your health care provider or clinic (e.g., first name, last initial). Tap **Join now**.
- **The message “Someone in the meeting should let you in soon” will appear.** Turn your microphone and camera off until the appointment starts and wait for instructions before turning them on.
- Tap **Leave** or  when the appointment has ended.

Using a Windows computer

- Tap the Meeting Link.
- This site is trying to open Microsoft Teams > Open and cancel > Teams Meeting Screen will appear.
- The Name field will appear. Type your name as instructed by your health care provider or clinic (e.g., first name, last initial). Tap **Join now**.
- **The message “Someone in the meeting should let you in soon” will appear.** Turn your microphone and camera off until the appointment starts and wait for instructions before turning them on.
- Tap **Leave** when the appointment has ended.

Join from a web browser using any device

Open the email invitation that you received from your health care provider or clinic and follow instructions below:

- Tap the **Meeting Link**. The default mobile browser Chrome/Edge (Android) or Safari/Chrome (iPad/iPhone) - will open. Choose the option to **Continue on this browser** or **Join on the web** rather than downloading the app.
- Allow microphone and camera permissions.
- The Name field will appear. Type your name as instructed by your health care provider or clinic (e.g., first name, last initial).
- Tap **Join now**. The following message will appear **Someone in the meeting should let you in soon**. Turn your microphone and camera off until the appointment starts and wait for instructions before turning them on.
- Tap **Leave** or  when the appointment has ended.

If you get a pop-up message **Teams would like to find and connect to devices on your local network:**

- **iPad/iPhone:** Settings > Apps > Teams > Local Network > toggle ON
- **Android:** Settings > Apps > Teams > Permissions > Nearby Devices > choose Allow