

Virtual Care

Patient Information Guide

Virtual care is any interaction between patients and the health care provider or team using approved virtual care technology.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- The virtual care technology used by Nova Scotia Health and IWK are private and secure.
- Virtual appointments are not recorded. You will be asked to give informed written consent for any exception to this.
- Nova Scotia Health and IWK employees and staff take all reasonable steps to protect patient privacy and maintain confidentiality.
- Personal health information is protected under the [Personal Health Information Act](#) and in accordance with [Nova Scotia Health Privacy Statement](#) and [IWK Privacy Statement](#). Only your health care provider will see your personal health information.

For more information regarding privacy, review the specific privacy statement (if applicable) for the virtual care technology being used for your virtual appointment. If you have any additional questions about privacy, contact Privacy@nshealth.ca or Privacy@iwk.nshealth.ca or contact your health care provider.

Benefits of using virtual care

- Provides an opportunity to access health care services wherever you are (e.g., home, work, hospital).
- Allows for 'Family Presence' (and others of your choosing) to attend your virtual appointment (e.g., family doctor, family, teacher, home care staff, social worker).
- Reduces the risk of exposure to infection or other illnesses.

Risks of using virtual care

- Potential equipment or internet connection failure.
- In rare instances, health and security protocols could fail, causing a breach of privacy of personal health information.
- If you are using web-based technology there is potential for significant cellular data usage if using data instead of a wireless "Wi-Fi" connection. You are responsible for any charges related to your internet data usage.
- Confidential conversations could be unintentionally overheard.
- Someone could accidentally join your virtual appointment.

At any time, you or your health care provider can end the virtual appointment if there are concerns (e.g., privacy, not meeting intended need) and other options can be discussed. All clinical care-related questions will be answered by the health care provider during your appointment.

At the end of your appointment you will be given any follow up details and responsibilities regarding your care. If you are having technical difficulties or if you have questions about virtual care, contact your health care provider.

¹[Patient & Family Guide 2019: Your Rights and Responsibilities, Pg 4](#)

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Specific video conferencing technology

Your health care provider or clinic will advise you of the type of virtual care technology that will be used during your appointment. See below for specific information regarding potential options.

Facility-based Telehealth Unit

Secure video conferencing equipment to connect patients with health care providers in other locations. This equipment allows a patient to see, hear and talk with their health care provider without having to meet in person. Refer to the [Poly Privacy Policy](#). Facility-based Telehealth Units are supported by facility staff.

Telehealth units are an option when patients do not have:

- An audio/video device (e.g., smartphone, tablet, laptop)
- Access to stable internet or cellular service
- Technical knowledge
- A private location

What can I expect at my telehealth appointment?

- You will need to register at the site 30 minutes before your appointment.
- Bring your provincial health card.
- You will be directed to the room where the telehealth equipment is set up for your appointment.
- A staff member will show you the equipment and answer any technical questions.

Zoom for Healthcare

Zoom for Healthcare is a secure, web-based video conferencing technology that connects patients to health care providers from any location using an internet or cellular connection. Zoom can be used on any device – mobile, laptop or PC. It is compliant with [Personal Health Information Act](#). To ensure your privacy is protected, Zoom for Healthcare does not collect your personal health information and there is no ability to record your appointment. If you choose to download Zoom to your personal device, review the [Zoom Privacy Statement](#).

To reduce the potential of risks:

- Do not share your confidential Zoom meeting information or post meeting invitation information publicly.
- A private location is recommended (e.g., use headphones and/or physical distancing to limit what those around you may hear).
- If you have a shared email account consider using an alternate email to receive your virtual appointment invitations.