

# TELEMEDICINE

Telemedicine lets a doctor or other healthcare provider care for you, even when you cannot see him or her in person. Telemedicine is more than a phone call, an email, a fax, or an online questionnaire. You and your healthcare team must decide if your health problem can be helped with telemedicine.

## THE TELEMEDICINE SESSION

During your telemedicine session:

- The provider will introduce herself.
- Verbal consent to treat you utilizing a telemedicine visit will be obtained.
- The provider may talk to you about your health history, exams, x-rays, and other tests.
- A visual and/or partial physical exam may take place. This may happen by video, audio, and/or or with other technology tools. Non-medical staff may be in the room to help with the technology.
- Video and/or photo records may be taken, and audio recordings may be made.
- A report of the session will be placed in your medical record. You can get a copy from your provider.

All laws about the privacy of your health information and medical records apply to telemedicine. These laws also apply to the video, photo, and audio files that are made and stored.

## RISKS AND COMMON PROBLEMS

Many patients like telemedicine because they do not have to spend time and money on travel to see a certain healthcare provider in person. Also, they can see a provider who they might not be able to see otherwise.

Technology can make getting health care easy, **but there can also be problems:**

- If there is an equipment or Internet problem, your diagnosis or treatment could be delayed.
- Records or images that are taken and sent may be poor quality. This can delay or cause problems with your diagnosis or treatment.
- The records sent for review before the session may not be complete. If this happens, then it may be hard for the telemedicine provider to use her best judgment about your health problem. For instance, you could react to a drug or have an allergic response if the provider does not have all of the facts about your health.
- There could be problems with Internet security and privacy. For instance, hackers may access or view your health information. If this happens, then your medical records may not stay private.
- If there is a technology problem, the information from your session may be lost. This would be outside the control of your doctor and the telemedicine provider.
- Without a hands-on exam, it may be hard to diagnosis your problem.

## MORE FACTS

A main goal of telemedicine is to make sure that you get good, personal health care, even though you are not seeing a provider in person.

There are requirements about having a face to face visit with a provider before telemedicine visits can take place and requirements about regular face to face visits with your provider in between telemedicine visits.

Telemedicine providers must follow the same rules for prescribing medications just as they would for an office visit.

Having a telemedicine session is your choice. Even if you have agreed to the session, you can stop your medical records from being sent – if this has not happened yet. You can stop the session at any time. You can limit the physical exam.

You will be told about all staff who will take part in the session. You can ask that any of these people leave the room to stop them from seeing or hearing the session. It is up to you to make sure the setting for your session is private. It should only include people who you are willing to share health information with. Your telemedicine provider can ask that people with you leave the room to make sure your session is private.

Your session may end before all problems are known or treated. It is up to you to get more care if your health problem does not go away.

You will be told how long it might take to respond to your portal messages, phone calls, or other types of messages.

Before your session, you should check with your insurance company to confirm if telemedicine services are covered by your plan.