

# *Be* Motivated

Virtual Consultations





## Introduction to Virtual Consultations

Whether due to the unprecedented effects of COVID-19 or the impending transition into a new world of digital healthcare, the need for virtual consultations is at it's highest. Thanks to digital technology we can connect to our patients while ensuring both practice continuity and patient safety without increasing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Not technology savvy? Fear not, we have created a simple step-by-step guide that will help you adapt to digital healthcare. This will allow you to continue to provide safe and secure services to your patients, anytime and anywhere.

### Topics covered:

- Booking Virtual Consultations
- Preparing for Virtual Consultations:  
Technical Considerations
- Preparing for Virtual Consultations:  
Ethical considerations



# Booking Virtual Consultations

The first step to a virtual consultation is to provide your patients with a means of booking and distributing payment for their consultations.

This includes:



**Telephone/ email booking systems:** Patients can book appointments through your receptionist via a telephone or cell phone. Prior to the start of the virtual consultation, the patient is required to sign a consent form. This will then be exchanged with the patient via their desired means of communication.



**Online appointment scheduling:** An appointment tool that is linked to your website, business app and social media accounts. This tool allows the patient to book virtual consultations, sign the consent form and upload pre-consultation images and other patient information. Therefore promoting efficiency and security amongst all parties. Providing email appointment confirmations and reminders will help avoid cancellations and failed attendances.



**Consultation charging/ billing:** If charging for your consultation, check with you local government for billing policies and procedures. However, most payments can be taken over the telephone or via a secure online payment system.



# Preparing Virtual Consultations

Before commencing your virtual consultation it is important to consider following standard operating and clinical protocols and procedures. This will help maintain continuity and allow for a secure delivery of your virtual consultation.

This includes:

## Technical Considerations



**Secure delivery platforms:** Although there are many online systems available today for delivering a virtual consultation, the most commonly used platforms include: FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Doxy.me and Symplast. It is recommended to use a secure platform to ensure videos and calls are encrypted to protect both your privacy and that of your patients.



**Device requirements:** Virtual consultations can be achieved by connecting to the internet through the use of modern devices such as a mobile smart phone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer.



**Device software specifications:** Although most modern devices have built in speaker, microphone and high resolution camera systems, not all patients may own a device that can allow ideal virtual consultations. In these cases, external webcams can be purchased from any local electrical device store or online at a relatively low cost.



**Location recommendations:** Although video consultations provide unparalleled flexibility, ensuring both yourself and your patient are in appropriate locations is important. Make sure that your chosen area of consultation is completely isolated, contains good lighting and has minimal background noise. This is also the same for your patient. This will provide an ideal setting with minimal disruptions for the consultation.



# Preparing for Virtual Consultations

## Ethical Considerations



**Patient consent:** A signed patient consent form, created in line with ethical policies and procedures, must be obtained prior to beginning any virtual consultation.



**Patient Instructions:** If being technology savvy doesn't come natural to you, this could also hold true for your patients. Providing patients with step-by-step instructions on device specifications, the online communication platforms of choice and the virtual consultation procedure will aid in the creation of a smooth process. This in results can help avoid appointment cancellations and rescheduling.



**Patient confidentiality and data protection:** Just as with face-to-face consultations, privacy regulations need to be considered and maintained at all times. This includes checking and corroborating the patients identification upon commencing the virtual consultation, as well as accurately documenting and safely securely storing all patient data.



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