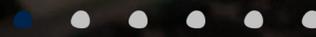


Your clinic from home:  
**What is  
telemedicine?**

A guide for people living with pulmonary fibrosis

This guide has been developed by Boehringer Ingelheim International GmbH in collaboration with Prof. Christopher Denton PhD FRCP (consultant rheumatologist), Dr. Felix Woodhead PhD FRCP (consultant respiratory physician) and representatives from patient organisations worldwide.

Created in collaboration with:





# What is telemedicine?

## The meaning of telemedicine



Many clinics and hospitals are now offering remote clinical services called *telemedicine*, generally involving telephone or video calls.<sup>1</sup> Telemedicine means that people can have **virtual appointments with a healthcare professional**.<sup>1</sup> It is used to help with the diagnosis, management and treatment of many conditions.<sup>1</sup>

## The history and future of telemedicine

Telemedicine services were designed to provide healthcare to people living in remote areas.<sup>3</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the use of telemedicine across the world.<sup>3,4</sup> It allows everyone to get healthcare advice from their own homes and **reduces clinic or hospital trips**.<sup>3,4</sup> By showing it can **provide high quality care remotely**, telemedicine is expected to **remain a part of routine care** in the future.<sup>4</sup> This makes it very important that you know how to get the most out of your telemedicine consultations.

## Talking to your healthcare professional about your telemedicine appointment

The use of telemedicine consultations isn't "one size fits all". Everyone's different, and what works for one person may not work as well for another.<sup>3</sup> If you have any questions about the type of consultation you've been offered, **get in touch with your clinic or hospital**. Together, you can discuss the best way to have your consultations.



The idea of virtual appointments with your physician or specialist nurse may seem strange at first. However, **clinical experts specialising in pulmonary fibrosis** will highlight the similarities between virtual and in-person appointments for **managing the condition**, and the **high quality of care that can be provided remotely**. Just like in-person appointments, you'll have plenty of time to discuss your condition. You can share any concerns or needs with your healthcare professional, and they will give you advice and answer your questions.

## Telemedicine definition

The World Health Organization describes "telemedicine" as "healing at a distance".<sup>2</sup>

There are two basic types of telemedicine:<sup>2</sup>

- *real-time* – when people are present at the same time for immediate exchange of information (for example, a telephone call with a healthcare professional) – the focus of this guide
- *store-and-forward* – when information is shared between people at different times (for example, the patient emails their healthcare professional, who later replies with advice on management) – not covered in this guide



### Basic requirements for a telemedicine appointment

You will need:

- a **device** (a desktop computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone for a video appointment; a landline or mobile phone for a telephone appointment)
- a **good internet connection** for a video appointment, or **good signal** for a telephone appointment
- a **platform** on your device for video appointments
- **support** from your caregiver, family member or friend with the **technology**, if necessary

You can find more information about these requirements in the section entitled "Think about the device you'll use" in the booklet that goes along with this one.

Take me to "Getting the best out of your consultation" booklet 

### The significant benefits of telemedicine appointments

The benefits of telemedicine consultations go beyond receiving remote care. Other advantages for you include:<sup>1,6</sup>

- potential for significant **cost and time savings**
- potential to **minimise fatigue**, as a result of not having to travel to a clinic or hospital
- being able to **continue with daily life with little interruption** (for example, you or your caregiver, family member or friend may not need to take time off work, or to arrange care for a dependant)
- **continuing to get care safely during the COVID-19 pandemic**, without risking exposure to the virus
- potential for **more convenient follow-up appointments**. This will make sure that your condition can be managed well by healthcare professionals



### Telemedicine platform definition

*Online video conferencing systems may run in your web browser, or need you to download and install an application onto your device.<sup>5</sup>*

*Video conferencing refers to technology that allows people to both see and speak with each other without having to move to a single place together.*

*An application is a programme that runs on your device. It is designed to help you perform a particular task using your device.*

### Telemedicine article



*Pulmonary Fibrosis News published an article on its website that outlines some of the benefits of telemedicine as identified by people using the service (in a survey done by the National Organization for Rare Disorders):*

<https://pulmonaryfibrosisnews.com/2020/10/22/telehealth-helpful-alternative-to-in-person-care-rare-disease-patients-say/>



# Is telemedicine beneficial and secure?

*Telemedicine appointments have been shown to be a beneficial way of providing care<sup>7-9</sup>*



People generally report having a positive experience with remote consultations. They've been described as **simulating in-person, face-to-face consultations** very well.<sup>7</sup>

The UK *National Institute for Health and Care Excellence* has **recommended the use of telemedicine consultations whenever possible** for the management of pulmonary fibrosis.<sup>8</sup> Their benefit has been clinically proven.<sup>9</sup>

The booklet that goes along with this one gives details of some of the simple things you can do to make your telemedicine consultation more beneficial.

Take me to "Getting the best out of your consultation" booklet

## *Telemedicine is secure, and purpose-designed*

Security is as important as the benefit of telemedicine services. It's understandable that you may have questions about this aspect.

You can feel reassured that it's the **duty and priority of health systems in most countries to protect patient data**, whether providing in-person or remote services.

The platforms used for video consultations generally have **inbuilt security systems**.<sup>10</sup> **No information that could identify you is stored** on these systems.<sup>10</sup> You may also have your own **private video room that only authorised healthcare professionals can enter** on some platforms.<sup>10</sup>

To **identify yourself before you access your video or telephone consultation**, it's likely that you'll need to enter some personal information (for example, your date of birth).<sup>10</sup> Depending on the platform, this information is deleted when your consultation finishes, and importantly, your consultations will **not be recorded**.<sup>10</sup>



**Clinical experts specialising in pulmonary fibrosis** offer reassurance that the platforms used have been **specifically designed** for your telemedicine consultations. As such, they should provide a **comfortable environment** to ask questions or raise any concerns with your healthcare professional.

# Is telemedicine bene

*Telemedicine appointments have been shown to be a good way of providing care<sup>7-9</sup>*



People generally report having a positive experience. They've been described as **simulating in-person**, very well.<sup>7</sup>

The UK *National Institute for Health and Care Excellence* **use of telemedicine consultations whenever possible** for people with pulmonary fibrosis.<sup>8</sup> Their benefit has been clinically proven.

The booklet that goes along with this one gives details of some things you can do to make your telemedicine consultation more

SECURITY CHECKS



Close



## Things you can check

Check whether the telemedicine platform or app that your clinic or hospital has asked you to use is **approved by your national health system**. This may help you feel more comfortable about the security of your online consultations. Many health systems have **published lists of platforms or apps** they've approved<sup>11</sup> from a benefit as well as security perspective. You are encouraged to check whether your health system has done so.

Note that some health systems have stated that it's **OK to use the video conferencing tools you may be used to**, such as Skype, WhatsApp or Zoom, especially for the short term.<sup>12</sup>

Whichever telemedicine software you're using, it may be worth looking into the following to make sure you're happy:<sup>13</sup>

- **encryption of any data**, i.e. does the platform information state that your data will be encrypted?
- **identification of users**, i.e. do you and your healthcare professional have to enter a password before accessing the consultation and go through two-factor authentication (a second identification check such as entering your date of birth)?
- **access to the platform**, i.e. do you have to enter a password before accessing the platform? Does it "time out" after a period of inactivity?
- **storage of data**, i.e. are any messages or files shared between you and your healthcare professional stored? Can you delete them?

## NHS-approved telemedicine platforms or apps



The UK *National Health Service* published a list of platforms it has approved for video consultations:<sup>11</sup>

<https://buyingcatalogue.digital.nhs.uk/solutions/dfocvc001>

## Encryption definition

*When data is translated into a code before sending between you and your healthcare professional. It is de-coded when the other person gets it.*<sup>13</sup>

## Staying safe online



The UK *National Cyber Security Centre* published its top tips for staying secure online. These general tips are not specific to telemedicine:

<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/top-tips-for-staying-secure-online>



Take me to "Getting the best out of your consultation" booklet 

## Telemedicine is secure, and purpose-designed

Security is as important as the benefit of telemedicine services that you may have questions about this aspect.

You can feel reassured that it's the **duty and priority of health service countries to protect patient data**, whether providing in-person

The platforms used for video consultations generally have **inbuilt security systems**.<sup>10</sup> **No information that could identify you is stored** on the platform. You may also have your own **private video room that only authorised professionals can enter** on some platforms.<sup>10</sup>

To **identify yourself before you access your video or telephone consultation**, it's likely that you'll need to enter some personal information (for example, your date of birth).<sup>10</sup> Depending on the platform, this information is deleted when the consultation finishes, and importantly, your consultations will not be recorded.



# Where can I go for more information and support?

For more practical tips on preparing for a productive telemedicine consultation and a guide to what will happen during your consultation, the booklet that goes along with this one may be helpful.

Take me to *"Getting the best out of your consultation"* booklet 

The clinics and hospitals using telemedicine will make sure you have all the information you need to get the most out of consultations. You should contact your clinic or hospital if you don't receive this.

Remember that if you need more information or support, your local patient organisation is there to help you. They may have other useful resources.

## FAQs



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK *National Health Service* published a helpful list of frequently asked questions and answers on the topic of video consultations:

[https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/B0569\\_v3\\_Attending-video-consultations-in-secondary-care-patient-FAQs\\_220621.pdf](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/B0569_v3_Attending-video-consultations-in-secondary-care-patient-FAQs_220621.pdf)

# Sources used

1. Williams OE *et al.* The use of telemedicine to enhance secondary care: some lessons from the front line. *Future Healthc J* 2017;4(2):109-14.
2. World Health Organization. Telemedicine opportunities and developments in Member States: report on the second global survey on eHealth 2009. Available at: [https://www.who.int/goe/publications/goe\\_telemedicine\\_2010.pdf](https://www.who.int/goe/publications/goe_telemedicine_2010.pdf). [Accessed: May 2021].
3. British Lung Foundation. What is telehealth? Available at: <https://www.blf.org.uk/technology-for-lung-health/technology-guide/what-is-telehealth>. [Accessed: May 2021].
4. Bhaskar S *et al.* Telemedicine across the globe - position paper from the COVID-19 Pandemic Health System REsilience PROGRAM (REPROGRAM) International Consortium (Part 1). *Front Public Health* 2020;8:556780.
5. National Health Service. Attending video consultations in secondary care: patient FAQs. April 2021. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/B0569-attending-video-consultations-in-secondary-care-patient-FAQs-april-2021.pdf>. [Accessed: May 2021].
6. National Organization for Rare Disorders. Ensuring access to telehealth for rare diseases. 2020. Available at: <https://rarediseases.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NRD-2098-RareInsights-Telehealth-Report.pdf>. [Accessed: May 2021].
7. Almathami HKY *et al.* Barriers and facilitators that influence telemedicine-based, real-time, online consultation at patients' homes: systematic literature review. *J Med Internet Res* 2020;22(2):e16407.
8. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. COVID-19 rapid guideline: interstitial lung disease. 15 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng177/resources/covid19-rapid-guideline-interstitial-lung-disease-pdf-66141966254533>. [Accessed: May 2021].
9. Moor CC *et al.* Home monitoring in patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. A randomized controlled trial. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med* 2020;202(3):393-401.
10. National Health Service X. Using video conferencing and consultation tools. 27 January 2021. Available at: <https://www.nhsx.nhs.uk/information-governance/guidance/using-video-conferencing-and-consultation-tools/>. [Accessed: May 2021].
11. National Health Service Digital. DFOVC framework - results. Available at: <https://buyingcatalogue.digital.nhs.uk/solutions/dfocvc001>. [Accessed: May 2021].
12. British Medical Association. COVID-19: video consultations and homeworking. 9 April 2021. Available at: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/adapting-to-covid/covid-19-video-consultations-and-homeworking>. [Accessed: May 2021].
13. National Cyber Security Centre. Video conferencing services: security guidance for organisations. 21 April 2020. Available at: <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/video-conferencing-services-security-guidance-organisations>. [Accessed: May 2021].