

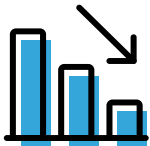
# WHAT TO EXPECT WITH YOUR CANCER CARE DURING COVID-19



According to the American Cancer Society, there will be an estimated **1.8 million** new cancer cases in the United States in 2020.<sup>1</sup>



As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, more than **22 million screening tests** may be canceled or delayed, resulting in **80,000 missed diagnoses** of certain cancers.<sup>2</sup>



Some studies show a **25% to 50% decrease** in newly diagnosed patients with cancer since the pandemic started.<sup>3</sup>

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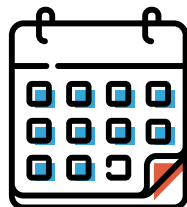
Cancer did not go away when COVID-19, or the coronavirus, started to spread throughout the United States. Even though COVID-19 has disrupted the daily lives of patients and their families, those who receive treatment and supportive care for cancer still need to visit their doctor. Doctors and other providers are quickly changing their practices to continue providing patient care while limiting the risk of spreading COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>

No two cancers or patients are the same. There are many factors that can affect treatment decisions, including if it is best to hold off on treatment to avoid being exposed to COVID-19. It is important to talk to your doctor about your options. This includes talking about<sup>4</sup>:

**Your medications**



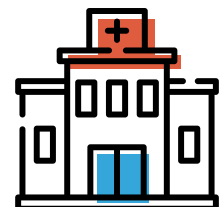
**Treatment schedule**



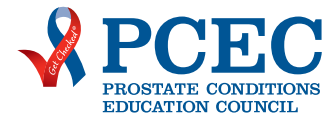
**Telehealth options**



**Being safe when you visit the doctor's office**



# PARTNERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS



Special thanks to PCEC for their contributions

Telehealth visits have become an important part of health care during the pandemic as many doctors may now provide these services.<sup>5,6</sup> Telehealth can be a great way to get the health care you need while still practicing social distancing.<sup>5</sup>

## What is telehealth?

Telehealth is the use of technology to receive care when you and the doctor are not in the same place at the same time.<sup>5</sup>

## What services can be offered through telehealth for cancer patients?

There are many services that can be completed through telehealth visits. The most common use of telehealth is talking to your doctor live over the phone or video chat. You can also write emails to your doctor, send files or messages, and monitor labs or test results. Even from home, you may be able to get general health care, like wellness visits, prescriptions for medicine, counseling, and other treatment.<sup>5</sup>



## Prescriptions

You should reach out to your doctor's office and pharmacy if you need a refill on your medication. They can work together to make sure your prescriptions are up to date.<sup>7</sup> To decrease the risk of exposure and keep others safe, you can use pharmacy drive-throughs, curbside pick-up, or delivery, if available. A healthy family member or friend could even pick up your medication.<sup>7,8</sup>

## Are telehealth visits covered by insurance?

Insurance coverage might depend on your insurance plan and where you live. If telehealth services are available to you, check with your doctor's office to find out which types of systems they use and if there is a cost for you. Check with your insurance company to see if this benefit is covered and how much you might have to pay.<sup>6,9</sup>

If you do not have health insurance due to COVID-19, visit [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) to review options for getting insurance coverage.

## Privacy

Even when using telehealth, privacy and protecting your medical information is still a major concern. Your health information is private and should be protected, whether receiving care at home or at a doctor's office.<sup>6,10</sup> Your doctor should let you know which system they use for telehealth appointments, and you'll be sent instructions on how to safely connect.<sup>10</sup>



## Resources

- Health Insurance: [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)
- Medicare and Medicaid Telehealth Services: [www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov)
- How to Properly Wear a Mask: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
- Telehealth Information for Patients: [www.telehealth.hhs.gov/patients](http://www.telehealth.hhs.gov/patients)

# TELEHEALTH (CONTINUED)

## What do you need for a telehealth appointment?

### Technology<sup>6,10,11</sup>

- Your doctor should provide step-by-step instructions on how to access the telehealth software.
- To get the most out of a telehealth visit with your doctor, you should have the following:
  - Video access through a phone, computer, or tablet with a high-speed internet connection.
  - Audio access through a phone line or internet connection.
- You should make sure the sound and video work on your phone or computer before the call starts.
- Your phone or computer should also be charged or plugged in.
- Your doctor might use an app that would need to be downloaded before your appointment.



### Paperwork<sup>10</sup>

- Your doctor will still need information about your medical history and insurance. Some forms may need to be completed and sent to your doctor before the appointment.

### Preparation<sup>6,10</sup>

- Make a list with the following:
  - Your symptoms and any other concerns that you have.
  - Medications you are taking and the pharmacy you get them from.
  - Questions you have about your condition.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if there have been any family members or others in your house who have been sick.
- Have a pen and paper ready to take notes.

### Consider your environment<sup>10,11</sup>

- Choose a spot with plenty of light. A flashlight or flash on your phone's camera might be helpful. You can also try turning on overhead lights or closing blinds and drapes to reduce background light.
- Find a quiet area that does not have a lot of background noise or distractions.
- It might be helpful to have a caregiver or assistance nearby for support. You should let your doctor know if there is anything you do not feel comfortable allowing the other person to hear. Also, discuss when your caregiver should talk so that your doctor is not confused by having many people speaking at the same time.



### Tips for the telehealth call<sup>6,10,11</sup>

- Treat the call like you would an in-person visit in your doctor's office.
- Call in 15 minutes early in case you have problems connecting.
- Make sure your camera is set up so that your doctor can see your head and shoulders on the screen.
- Answer your doctor's questions as directly as possible and listen closely.

# IN-OFFICE VISIT

Doctors around the country are working hard to balance the risk of COVID-19 and cancer by putting safety requirements in place that provide patients with the highest quality and safest care possible.<sup>7,12</sup>

## How to prepare for your in-office doctor's appointment

### Questions to ask your doctor before the visit<sup>7,12</sup>:

- What is their check-in policy? Should you call before entering the office?
- If any forms are needed, can these be sent over email or through regular mail?
- Can you bring a family member or caregiver with you?



### What to bring:

Your doctor should let you know everything that you need to bring to your appointment. You should also be prepared to wear a mask at all times while at the doctor's office. They may not allow you to bring a family member or caregiver, so it is important to check with them before you go.<sup>7</sup>



### What to expect:

Doctor's offices are taking extra steps to protect patients during this time. Some of these include<sup>7,12</sup>:

- Checking your temperature.
- Requiring everyone to wear masks.
- Closing off waiting areas.
- Making sure social distancing is followed.
- Requesting patients to wash their hands upon arrival.



## How to use a mask properly<sup>13</sup>

- Before putting on a mask, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a mask, and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, wash your hands.
- Replace the mask with a new one if it is damp and do not reuse single-use masks.
- To remove the mask: remove it from behind (do not touch the front of the mask); throw it away immediately in a closed bin; then wash your hands.

**Wearing a mask shows you care!**

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