

Having a phone or video consultation with your regular GP

Information and support for patients



This document provides information and support if you need to see your GP and the safest, most appropriate way to do this is by a phone or video consultation.

Many general practices are now offering phone and video consultations in place of face-to-face appointments, to reduce the risks from COVID-19 (coronavirus).

This guide:

- helps you work out when you should see your regular general practitioner (GP) via phone or video consultation
- explains how to arrange a phone or video consultation with your GP
- helps you to prepare for a phone or video consultation with your GP
- explains what will happen during a phone or video consultation with your GP
- explains how you can obtain prescriptions, test and referrals from your GP.

The information is a guide only. Your general practice may have different processes in place for conducting phone and video consultations.

1. When should I see my GP via a phone or video consultation?

You are encouraged to see your GP via a phone or video consultation if possible, if any of the following apply to you:

- you are self-isolating due to a confirmed/possible diagnosis of COVID-19
- you
 - are over the age of 70
 - have a medical condition or issue where your immune system is vulnerable
 - are pregnant
- you have, or someone who you live with has, symptoms that might be COVID-19
- you are anxious about attending your general practice for a face-to-face appointment
- you live in a residential aged care home where staff can support you to have a phone or video consultation
- your regular GP is self-isolating/working from a location other than your usual practice.

Note: You might still need to see your regular GP (or another GP in the practice) for an in-person appointment in the practice, and this is okay.

2. How do I book a phone or video consultation with my GP?

Ring your practice or go to their website. If your practice usually takes online bookings, you might be able to book a phone or video consultation directly through the online booking system.

Talk to the practice receptionist about whether you should book a video or phone consultation.

Ask the receptionist whether your consultation will cost anything. If it will, find out whether you need to pay before or after your consultation, and how you should pay.

3. How do I prepare for a phone or video consultation with my GP?

- If you are having a **phone consultation**, you will just need your mobile or landline phone.
- If you are having a **video consultation**, ask the practice what they use (eg Skype, WhatsApp) and download the relevant app or ask someone to help you do this.

A good internet connection will help you to have a positive experience. It is also important to identify a quiet, private place where you can talk to your GP over the phone or video. Choose somewhere where there is no background noise.

Ask the practice (or check to see if the information is on their website) how the consultation will start – for example, will the GP contact you via the chosen application or will you receive an email invitation?

Test your audio and video connection to make sure you can hear and see well.

4. What will happen in a phone or video consultation with my GP?

While you should expect the same kind of care from a phone or video consultation with your GP as you would in a face-to-face appointment, some things will be different. Below are some things that you might expect to happen and that you should do during your phone or video consultation:

- Wait for your GP to call or invite you to the consultation. As with appointments in the practice, your GP might be running behind.
- Make sure you have your device near you and not on silent mode.
- When the phone/video call is connected, you and the GP should say hello/wave to make sure you can hear and see each other before starting.
- If you're having a phone consultation, your GP might need to ask you some initial questions to make sure they're talking to the right person.
- If you're having a video consultation, your GP might ask you to confirm your phone number and tell you that they will call you if the video call is disconnected at any time.
- There may be times when the GP stops talking (for phone calls) or looks away from the screen (for video calls). The GP will most likely be reading something in your patient health record, or typing notes into your patient health record. If you are unsure what is happening at any time during the consultation, it's okay to ask.
- During a video consultation, it's okay for you to look at the screen; you don't need to look directly at the camera.
- You can use the screen camera to show your GP things such as areas of pain or a wound.
- Your GP will go through everything covered in your consultation, including any actions you need to take (eg getting a blood test, getting and filling your prescription, making another appointment). Make sure you write these down.
- Ask your GP to clarify anything you did not understand during your consultation.
- When you've both said goodbye, you can disconnect the call.

5. Obtaining prescriptions, tests and referrals from my GP

Prescriptions

Getting your prescription to the pharmacy

Temporary changes have been made that allow your GP to send your chosen pharmacy a copy of your prescription via email, text message or fax.

Confirm with your GP that your correct postal address is written on your prescription.

You, or your GP, should contact your chosen pharmacy to make sure they have your medication in stock.

Getting your repeats prescriptions or existing paper prescriptions to your pharmacy

If you have an existing paper prescription or repeat prescription at home, you will need to ask someone to visit the pharmacy on your behalf with the paper prescription.

If this is not possible, you can seek a new prescription from your GP via a telehealth consultation (call the practice to find out how you can do this).

Before collecting medication from a pharmacy, call to make sure they have your medication in stock.

Getting your medications from your pharmacy if you are confined to your home

If you would like your medication delivered to your home, contact your chosen pharmacy and confirm:

- they have received your prescription
- they have your medication in stock
- they are able to deliver to your home
- what payment arrangements are in place.

The pharmacy can only deliver to the address written on the prescription they receive.

Note: You may be eligible for the Government-funded [Australia Post delivery service](#).

More information is available via the Australian Government Department of Health fact sheet '[Helping you get your medicine if you are confined to your home](#)'.

Blood test and radiology requests

If you need a request for a blood test or radiology appointment, your GP can send the request to you by email, fax or text.

You can then contact the pathology or radiology clinic you wish to attend, and ask how you should forward the electronic request to them (via email is preferable).

If you know which pathology or radiology clinic you will attend while on the phone or video call with your GP, you can ask your GP to send directly to the clinic. You may need to contact the clinic to book an appointment (for radiology).

The results will be sent back to your GP as usual.

Disclaimer

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Healthy Australia.