



## Tips to prepare for a remote/virtual hospital consultation

The ever-evolving COVID-19 situation has had an impact on society in many ways, which has meant that hospitals and dermatology departments have had to change the way they interact with their patients. In order to ensure ongoing treatment and continuity of care, many patients like you are being offered a telephone or video call, instead of face-to-face appointments.


### What is a remote or virtual hospital consultation?

A remote/virtual appointment is a consultation by phone or video call, instead of a face-to-face meeting with a member of your dermatology team. During a virtual appointment, you will have an opportunity to talk to the healthcare professional on the medical team; this may be a doctor or nurse specialist. This short guide will help you prepare for your appointment, so you don't forget to ask something or remember something that might be mentioned on the call.

Depending on how each department manages virtual appointments, the hospital/department will decide which type of appointment (phone, video or face-to-face) to offer you. Virtual clinics may not suit everyone and you don't necessarily have to have a virtual consultation if you choose not to do so.

Some hospitals are in the process of implementing virtual clinics "Attend Anywhere" which is a safe platform for video consultations. For more information, click on links below:

VIDEO  [Attend Anywhere video from HSE website](#)

VIDEO  [Staff and clients from the HSE community healthcare area of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo explain how Attend Anywhere video technology works.](#)

### Why are remote or virtual clinics important?

Virtual clinics help patients maintain social distancing by reducing the need to visit the hospital/department and to minimise the risk of infection. However, you may still have to go to the hospital or GP for blood tests, which are usually carried out before your virtual clinic appointment, so that the test results are back in time for review by the doctor.

### How will you know about your remote/virtual appointment?

You will be contacted by letter, phone or text, with information which may include:

- How you will get information about your appointment.
- Date and time of appointment with the dermatology team, looking after your care.
- Depending on type of virtual appointment (e.g. online video call), any equipment that you may require, and step-by-step instructions\*.

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\*The hospital/clinic may contact patients when confirming appointment and check that patients have the required technology. If patients are offered a video-call, they will receive a link with instructions on how to join the appointment.

## Simple tips on preparing for your virtual appointment (prior, during and the end of consultation)

### Prior to appointment:

- Ensure that your dermatology team have your correct contact details: telephone number/email.
- Consider any questions you would like to ask during the appointment.
- Prepare a list of any tablets, injections or creams that you are currently on, how long you have used them and how you are managing these. It may be helpful to have these medications and tubes of cream at hand.
- Find a quiet area to take the call/video call, and ideally an area where you won't be disturbed. For video chats, try not to sit with a bright light or window behind you.
- Ensure the device you are using for the appointment is fully charged, and depending on appointment type, that you are positioned in an area with stable internet and mobile phone coverage.
- Have a pen and paper to make notes.
- If you feel that you would like extra support, and if appropriate, you might consider asking a family member to be with you.
- If the consultation is for a child, an adult (i.e. parent or guardian) must be present.
- Phone calls from hospitals/clinics may show on your phone as a withheld number or "No caller ID".
- Before your video appointment, test your equipment, you may also need to activate the microphone and camera on your device.

### During appointment:

- If your consultation is a video call, log on about 10 minutes before your appointment time.
- The appointment may not take place at the exact time, so you may want to clear some time either side.
- A member of your dermatology team will introduce themselves to you if you don't know them already. They may also ask you to confirm your name, address and date of birth, to ensure they are talking to the correct patient.
- Speak clearly so your voice can be heard by your dermatology team member.
- If you can't hear, or are having difficulty in understanding what is being said, it is important to say this to the caller. It is ok to ask them to explain or clarify something again.
- Ask any questions you have prepared and write down any important information or advice given.
- Report any symptoms such as itch, pain, burning or stinging. It is important to mention any recent infections or illness.

### At the end of the appointment:

- Ensure you understand the next steps or plan for further treatment.
- Ask about prescriptions, blood tests or if the treatment plan continues as before, or has changed.
- If your treatment plan involves applying creams to your skin, ensure you understand where on the body you are to apply which cream, how much to use and for how long.
- Clarify when your next appointment will be, so that you know when to expect to be reviewed again.