CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

ACCESSING TELEHEALTH

What is Telehealth?

Telehealth is a way of delivering health services remotely, either through telephone, video conferencing or other communication technologies. It is the way health services are brought to clients who are unable to be in physical contact with a health service provider.

All Australians now have access to Telehealth services:

Outside of consultations, communications technology has already been implemented in many health fields to allow for:

- **Monitoring.** Remote monitoring devices, such as a heart monitor for a cardiac patient.
- **Prescriptions.** Official prescriptions for patients who may not be able to see a local doctor.
- **Information sharing.** Vital information and other important medical details can be shared securely over the internet to improve patient outcomes.
- **Diagnosis.** For example, an ophthalmologist could diagnose an eye condition via a video call.

How has Telehealth been expanded with the coronavirus pandemic?

The federal government has unveiled a $2.4 billion plan to combat COVID-19's spread here in Australia. $100 million of this has been put towards establishing a new Medicare Telehealth consultation service. At present, this is a temporary six-month measure.

Currently, **this bulk-billed service is available to anyone who is in home quarantine** as a result of current national coronavirus isolation criteria. It's also available to people who have been identified as being at high risk from the virus even if currently healthy, including:

- People over 70.
- Indigenous people over 50.
- People with chronic conditions or immunocompromised systems.
- Parents with new babies.
- Pregnant people.

There is no restriction on what platform can be used for the consultation, with phone, FaceTime, and Skype being listed as examples. You can contact **any health professional** if you are in quarantine or isolation for COVID-19. If you are symptomatic but have not been confirmed, you must contact someone that you've seen face-to-face in the past 12 months to be eligible for bulk billing.

Allied mental health services are also included on the Medicare schedule for Telehealth, to provide further support. Health funds will cover Australians' access to teleconsultations for psychology services during the COVID-19 outbreak.

How can I access Telehealth services?

If you are currently in isolation as a result of national COVID-19 quarantine guidelines, you can call or video call any eligible doctor, nurse or mental health professional and be covered by Medicare.

If you are in a vulnerable group listed above with no current symptoms, you may only call a professional you've seen face-to-face in the past 12 months to be eligible for bulk billing.

Below are two national Telehealth services, how they work and their contact information.

Healthdirect

- How it works: The helpline offers you the option of having a phone or video call with a GP during after hours. Eligible patients are referred to a video call by a registered nurse. You can use your smartphone, tablet or desktop computer to speak to them.
- Contact info. Free calls on 1800 022 222.

HealthNow

- How it works: Call and book an appointment. A Telehealth coordinator will arrange your consultation. You'll then receive a call back from a doctor, psychologist or specialist at an appointment time of your choice.
- Contact info. 1800 870 711

V7.4.20 - Information extracted from www.finder.com.au/telehealth#access