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# TIPS: Using Telehealth and Other Remote Services

During the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions on movement and physical distancing requirements have led to an increase in the use of telehealth to deliver NDIS services. Below we answer some frequently asked questions about telehealth.

## **What is telehealth?**

Telehealth lets you access your healthcare or other service provider appointments remotely using your smartphone, tablet or computer.

You can either have your appointment over the phone or by using a video chat program to talk to your service provider over the internet.

To use video-based telehealth you will need a suitable device that has a camera and microphone and a good internet connection.

## **When can I use telehealth for NDIS services?**

Telehealth can be used when you are not, or cannot be, in the same physical location as your provider. Providers need to make sure the standard of care they deliver is equal to face-to-face care.

You and your provider must discuss the risks involved when using telehealth and the most appropriate way to deliver the service. You need to make sure that your service agreement does not prohibit telehealth.

If you access telehealth due to COVID-19 you may return to face-to-face services after restrictions or risks change. Your provider should support this smooth transition and provide a face-to-face review.

## **What supports can I access through telehealth or online?**

As long as your provider can ensure you'll get the same quality of service, any of your usual supports and services can be provided through telehealth. This includes support workers, recovery coaches, support coordinators, allied health providers such as psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and dietitians as well as many other services.

Telehealth should give you more choice and control about what services you can access. For example, Psychosocial Recovery Coaches are not available in all locations so you may only be able to access this support remotely using telehealth.

## **Can NDIS help me buy technology needed to access telehealth?**

During the COVID-19 pandemic the NDIS has supported participants to continue existing services by funding technology to access services remotely using telehealth.

You can use up to \$750 of your NDIS funds to buy a tablet or computer. The NDIS does not provide funding for internet accounts or data. Talk to your support coordinator, plan manager or service provider about whether you can use this support.

### **Learn more...**

[Flexible low-cost AT for support continuity](#)

[Low-cost assistive technology \(AT\) for support continuity](#)

## **How can I access telehealth if I don't have a computer or tablet?**

Depending on your location, you may be able to access your telehealth appointments from your local doctor's clinic or health clinic. They may already be set up for telehealth appointments. Staff there can often help you start your telehealth consultation.

Community centres, libraries and activity centres often provide access to computers that can be used for telehealth consultations.

When finding a suitable place, check that:

- You can talk out loud (this may not be allowed in e.g. a library)
- The internet connection is good enough for your purpose
- You will have the privacy you need for the service you're accessing.

## **Can the NDIS support me to learn how to use technology?**

Depending on your NDIS plan, you may be able to access training to use technologies required for telehealth, including smartphones, tablets, computers, and the internet. Speak to your Local Area Coordinator or Support Coordinator about whether you are eligible for this type of support.

## **How safe is telehealth to use?**

When using telehealth it is important that your providers take the necessary measures to protect your privacy and your personal information. They are responsible for ensuring that digital platforms they use are secure, that safeguards like data encryption are in place and that only authorised individuals can access your information.

If you are concerned about your privacy or the safety of your personal information when using telehealth, discuss your concerns with your provider. Things you might ask:

- What security is in place?
- What is done with my information?
- What are the most secure telehealth platforms available?
- Are sessions recorded or stored?

- Can others view the session?

## **Will telehealth continue with NDIS services after COVID-19?**

Yes. Telehealth existed before COVID-19 and for many services it will continue in some form after the pandemic is over. For many people this will mean more options about what supports they access. This could be particularly useful, for example, for people living in rural and remote areas.

Check with your service provider if they will be eligible to provide telehealth services after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended.

## **What if I don't want to use telehealth services?**

You don't have to use telehealth services If you don't want to.

However, depending on where you are and what services are available to you locally, you may find it very useful to access telehealth services. This will give you more options and greater choice and control over what supports you can use.

If you find it difficult to use telehealth services then you may be able to get appropriate support and training through your NDIS plan. Speak to your Local Area Coordinator or Support Coordinator about whether you are eligible for this type of support.