



RENAL MEDICINE ASSOCIATES
TELEHEALTH CLINIC

FAQ's About Telehealth/Telemedicine



A. What is telemedicine?

Telemedicine allows patients to receive care by a medical specialist, who may be located in another city or area of the country, without having to travel to see them in person. Patients experience real-time visits with medical professionals by using a computer and special electronic equipment. The computer is specifically designed with a camera and audio so the specialist and you can talk.

B. How common is telehealth?

Telehealth is health. It is a significant and rapidly growing modality of care in the United States and utilization rates are rising. According to a 2018 JAMA study, annual telemedicine visits have increased at an average annual compound growth rate of 52% from 2005 to 2014. The AHA states that 76% of U.S. hospitals connect with patients and consulting practitioners using video and other technology, and a study performed by NGBH revealed that virtually all (96%) of the nation's large employers will provide medical coverage for telehealth in 2019.

C. Who determines if a telemedicine visit is needed?

Your primary care clinician will determine if a specialist is needed. The clinician and/or medical staff will schedule a time for the specialist to meet with you and will be present during the visit with the specialists.

D. Why telemedicine?

Many patients have challenges traveling to clinics, hospitals, or other healthcare facilities for a variety of reasons. Telemedicine allows patients/families another way of receiving quality care in a safe and personalized method.

E. Is telehealth safe?

Yes. Data from a 2018 survey of healthcare providers by Deloitte found that telehealth can improve patient experience, an important factor in quality care. In fact, nine out of ten physicians (90%) see the benefits of virtual care, especially regarding patient experience – access to care, patient satisfaction, and improved communication with the care team being the main benefits.

F. What occurs prior to the telemedicine visit?

Prior to the telemedicine visit, your health history is shared with the specialist, such as lab results, x-rays and other test results. This allows the specialist time to review the information. The referring clinician and/or medical staff will give you an opportunity to view a patient education video that will demonstrate a telemedicine visit that takes place in a hospital setting. The example in the video is similar to a telemedicine visit that takes place in a clinic setting. The only difference is the visit will be located in an exam room in the clinic.

G. What occurs during the telemedicine visit?

The local clinician or a staff member will set up the telemedicine equipment within the hospital room or clinic exam room. They will explain the equipment to you and answer your questions. You will be asked if you need to use the bathroom and make sure you're comfortable prior to beginning the visit.

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This will allow for a more relaxed visit with the specialist. Once the specialist is connected, you will be introduced. For your safety and privacy, the specialist will ask you to state your name and provide your date of birth. For the physical exam, the local clinician or medical staff member will use special pieces of equipment, such as a special stethoscope, which allows the specialist to hear your heart and lung sounds. If the specialist must get a closer look, they will be able to zoom in the camera. They have the ability to take photos, too, but (for example: a skin rash) you will be told if and when this will occur. The specialist will develop a plan of care and explain it to you. He/she may ask you to repeat back in your own words the plan of care to confirm your understanding. The local clinician and specialist will be in contact with each other as needed.

H. What will the telemedicine visit cost?

It is important to check with your insurance company to verify specific coverage and co-pays associated with the Telemedicine visit. Your insurance will be billed similar to in person visit. If you have any questions, please ask.

I. Does Medicare or Medicaid pay for telehealth services?

Medicare – Yes, in certain circumstances. Many telehealth services, such as remote radiology, pathology and some cardiology, are covered simply as “physician services.” For traditional fee-for-service beneficiaries living in rural areas, Medicare covers physician services using videoconferencing and remote patient monitoring. The 14 million beneficiaries in Medicare Advantage (managed care) plans may have broader access, depending on their plan benefits. The ATA is committed to removing arbitrary restrictions that limit telehealth coverage.

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Medicaid – Every state Medicaid plan covers at least some telehealth services; however, states vary greatly in their coverage. The ATA has challenged each state to fully cover telehealth to improve access while simultaneously reducing service costs.

J. Do private insurance plans usually cover telehealth services?

Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia have parity laws that require private insurers to cover telehealth the same as in-person services. Most insurance providers cover at least some telehealth services.

K. What is the market size for telehealth?

While market size estimates vary depending on units of service, all research firms agree the telehealth market is growing rapidly. One analyst report found the global telemedicine market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.8% from 2017 to 2023.