

# Telehealth and Parkinson's



**Telehealth or telemedicine is when healthcare providers deliver health-related services and information using technology. Telemedicine appointments are becoming an ever-increasing part of healthcare. In addition, studies show that care delivered through telemedicine is as good as care delivered at a medical center. In fact, some people prefer telemedicine appointments because they feel more at ease in the comfort of their own home.**

## Reasons to Use Telemedicine

Virtual appointments are convenient, allowing people at any stage of Parkinson's disease (PD) to meet with their doctor from anywhere using a smartphone, tablet, or computer with internet access. Through telemedicine, a movement disorder specialist (neurologists with additional training in Parkinson's) can treat and address most Parkinson's symptoms, adjust medications, assess the disease's progression and recommend additional therapies.

According to a Parkinson's Foundation COVID-19 survey, 46% of people who started using telehealth during the pandemic hope to have this option in the future — indicating that telehealth may be a great complement to in-person care. While telemedicine can never fully replace all the benefits of in-person appointments, there are many benefits to telemedicine:

- No need to arrange transportation
- Less time spent going to and from appointments and in waiting rooms
- Helps those struggling with fatigue
- Reduces exposure to other people's germs and viruses
- More casual than the doctor's office
- Helps providers assess home safety and make changes in real time
- Provides access to specialists not available locally

### Types of Appointments

Telemedicine appointments can be made for almost any type of medical appointment.

Physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, mental health services and some neurology appointments are just a few examples of appointments that can be done virtually.

In most cases, the health professional will rely on video in addition to audio to properly conduct the appointment, requiring a strong internet connection.

Of course, there may be instances where specific tests or appointments need to be done in person. Discuss with your doctor what can be done virtually and in-person. If you have a deep brain stimulation (DBS) system, it may have a feature that allows your physician to perform tests and routine check-ups and adjust levels to treat symptoms without requiring a hospital visit. Ask your physician if this is possible for your DBS system.

### Participating in Telemedicine without a Computer or WiFi

There may be ways to get the necessary care if you do not have access to a computer or WiFi. A smartphone with video capability can be used to meet virtually with your doctor. Check your cellular data plan and usage to avoid overage fees. You will need to prop up and stabilize your phone so that your doctor can see you properly. If you do not have access to a computer or a smartphone, contact your local Area Agency on aging and ask if they have computers or tablets you can use. You can find the nearest location by calling **1-800-677-1116**. If you do not have an Area Agency on Aging near you or cannot find similar resources, you can call 2-1-1 and ask for resource suggestions.

