



Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Telehealth

What is Telehealth? Telehealth (also called telemedicine) is a way to have an appointment with your provider remotely, without having to go to the provider's office. Telehealth uses live videoconferencing technology similar to "Skype" or "FaceTime", but with special privacy features. Telehealth can also use other technologies that allow your provider to monitor certain vital signs like blood pressure, glucose levels or even heart ECGs remotely when these tools are connected through phone lines or the internet.

Can I use Telehealth for my mental health needs? Yes. In addition to the term "Telehealth" you may also hear terms like Telemental health, Telepsychiatry, or simply "Telepsych" when referring to telehealth with a mental health professional. Any licensed mental health provider can use Telehealth to meet the needs of their patients.

Do I need any special equipment to use Telehealth? Patients can use a computer, a tablet or a smart phone for a Telehealth appointment. You will also need an internet connection or, if using a smart phone, enough data to support videoconferencing. A big advantage of Telehealth, above simply talking to your provider on the phone, is that the patient and provider can see one another. This allows for valuable information like body language, facial expressions and general appearance to better inform you and your provider.

What about my privacy using Telehealth? The main difference between Telehealth and products like Skype or FaceTime is that the program your provider uses must meet certain regulations that assure patient privacy. When your provider uses telehealth you don't have to worry that someone else will have access to that information and the sessions are not recorded

In what situations would I consider using Telehealth? Telehealth can be especially helpful in situations where there is no provider or therapist near the patient's home, during natural disasters or during times like now when, because of the Coronavirus, social distancing or quarantine prevents a patient from meeting face to face with their provider.

How do I know if I should be using Telehealth and how do I schedule a Telehealth appointment? Call your provider/therapist and ask if they offer Telehealth. If they do, your provider/therapist may also be able to help you decide if you are a good candidate. In some cases this will be clear under the current Coronavirus rules and guidelines, for example if you are elderly or have a health condition that puts you at greater risk. Other times it may be that the patient simply feels more comfortable staying home and exercising caution. Talk to your provider/therapist about your thoughts and feelings so that they might help you make a decision.

Is Telehealth covered by health insurance? In most cases, yes. Because of the Coronavirus, Telehealth is being made more available to the general public. Call your insurance company to see if they cover Telehealth. Under the new emergency guidelines many health insurance companies are covering

Telehealth and also waiving the normal co-payment. If your insurance is through Medicaid or Medicare, Telehealth is covered.

What if I don't have the right equipment or I'm not comfortable with the technology needed to participate in Telehealth? Some provider/therapists are also offering Virtual Check-ins and E-Visits to communicate with their patients. These options use just a phone (Virtual Check-ins) or just a computer or smartphone (E-Visits). When you call your provider/therapist to ask about Telehealth be sure to ask about these options too, if you're not comfortable or able to use traditional Telehealth.

Can my provider/therapist prescribe medication through Telehealth? The short answer is yes. Many prescribers utilize electronic prescribing to send your prescription to the pharmacy. Your provider can talk with you about your medications using Telehealth the same way they would if you were meeting with them in their office. Also, rules about prescribing controlled substances without a face-to-face appointment have been relaxed.

Can I still meet in person with my provider? In some cases, yes. Remember that not everyone needs to use Telehealth or even has to use it. Many providers and therapists are still meeting face-to-face with their patients. But if you are considered to be at higher risk, experiencing symptoms consistent with the Coronavirus, or if you're simply not comfortable meeting with your provider face-to-face at this time, Telehealth might be right for you.

Can I use Telehealth in crisis situation? As always, if you or someone you know is experiencing a physical health or mental health crisis, call 911 or report to the nearest emergency room as soon as possible. Telehealth is not intended to be used for these types of emergencies. And never leave a person alone if they are actively suicidal.

For more in-depth information about Telehealth and Telemental health please visit:

The American Telemedicine Association:

<https://www.americantelemed.org/resource/why-telemedicine/>

The American Psychiatric Association

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-telepsychiatry>



MHANYS.org



@MHANYSinc



@MHAacrossNYS