

**Attending video consultations: Patient FAQs**

**May 2020**

**General FAQs**

**What is a video consultation?**

A video consultation is an appointment that takes place between a patient and a clinician over video, as opposed to face-to-face or over the telephone. You will receive the same quality of care as you would in a face-to-face appointment.

**Why is the NHS using video consultations?**

There are lots of benefits to using video consultations, including:

* Saving patients, their families and carers time and money by removing the need to travel to an appointment
* Giving patients the flexibility to have their consultations in a place that is convenient to them
* Reducing disruption to a patient’s day, by reducing the amount of time they need to attend an appointment
* Reducing carbon emissions associated with travel
* Reducing the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, by avoiding face-to-face contact.

**Why is the NHS using video consultations as part of its COVID-19 response?**

* Using video consultations supports with the NHS’ COVID-19 response by:
* Preventing the transmission of the disease, by reducing the need for physical attendance at NHS sites
* Enabling clinicians to see patients who are unable to travel, this includes patients who are in at risk groups or who need to self-isolate
* Enabling clinicians to work from home, this includes staff in at risk groups, those who are self-isolating or those who are experiencing travel difficulties.

**I have been offered a face-to-face appointment but do not want to come in because of COVID-19. What should I do?**

Some face-to-face appointments will be necessary over this period. The decision on whether an appointment will take place face-to-face, on video or by telephone will be taken by an expert clinician based on your individual care needs.

If you are worried about attending a face-to-face appointment, please contact your provider, who may be able to offer you an appointment either by telephone or video instead.

If you think you have COVID-19 you should cancel your appointment and make sure you are following official advice on the NHS website.

It is important that you let us know if you need to cancel your appointment, so that we can use the time to care for other patients.

**Are video consultations right for me?**

Video consultations are suitable for many patients who do not need a physical examination and who are able to communicate via video. Your clinician will only invite you to a video consultation if they believe it is right for you, and balanced against the risks of Covid-19.

You do not have to accept the offer of a video consultation. A telephone appointment may be the alternative during the Covid period as face-to-face appointments are being minimised for reasons of social distancing.

Your consent is vital. If at any time you feel that you would like to end the video consultation, you can advise your clinician that you would like to end the video call and revert to a phone call or discuss if face-to-face is available.

**Can a family member, carer or friend join me for my video consultation?**

Yes. If they are in the same location as you, it is possible to have someone with you during your video consultation. You should let your clinician know if you have someone with you at the start of your appointment.

Our video platform also allows multiple users to dial into the same consultation, even if they are not in the same location, where required, all controlled by the clinician. If you would like to invite a family member, carer, or friend you can either:

* share your appointment link with the individual(s) in advance so they can join the waiting area from another location at the time of your appointment. You will need to ask your clinician to invite them to join the consultation at the start of your appointment.
* give your clinician the individual’s email address or mobile phone number during your appointment and the clinician will send them an instant message, with a link enabling them to join your appointment.

**What equipment do I need for a video consultation?**

You can access your video consultation on a smartphone, tablet or laptop/computer. You can use your device’s inbuilt microphone and camera, but some people find they get better call quality using an external headset and web camera. You will need to be connected to the internet through Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G or an ethernet connection.

It is a good idea to test your equipment before your appointment. You can do so by completing a ‘test call’ through our website link <http://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/video-clinic/>.

**Will I need to download anything?**

The platform is called Attend Anywhere and is accessed via a web browser and does not require any applications to be downloaded. You can use either Google Chrome (for PC/Mac/Android devices) or Safari (for iOS devices and Macs).

**What happens if I am late for my video consultation?**

If you are late, you can still enter the waiting room in case the clinician can still see you but they may not see that you are there. If you are unable to make contact with the clinician you should reschedule your appointment in the normal way, which should be set out in your appointment letter.

**Attend Anywhere FAQs**

**How do I access my video consultation?**

Patients will be informed of their appointment, usually by letter but in some cases, by email, text or phone call.

Patients will receive information on how they can access the platform from from the Trust’s internet page using either Google Chrome (for PC/Mac/Android devices) or Safari (For iOS devices and Macs). <http://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/video-clinic/> from which they can select the virtual waiting room to enter. The virtual waiting room name will be described in their appointment information.

**How much data does a video call use?**

Patients do not use any data whilst waiting for a clinician to join them on their call. A 20-minute video consultation uses about 230MB of data on a mobile device, and 450 MB on a PC or laptop. The exact amount will depend on the connection speed, and how many participants there are on the call.

**What happens if I lose connection during my video consultation?**

If you should lose connection, in the first instance see if you can still speak to the clinician – it may be that the video has disappeared but not the audio. You can try clicking the “refresh” button and the consultation will be refreshed and often solves the problem. You may momentarily see a message saying that you have left the call but you will quickly be automatically reconnected so just wait for a minute. You will not lose your place in the clinic. Alternatively the clinician may tell you that they will refresh their screen.

If the issue continues you may be asked to continue to an appointment on the telephone instead. Alternatively an alternative appointment can be arranged.

**Is the platform secure?**

The platform has an inbuilt three-tier security system. Patients have their own private video room, that only authorised clinicians can enter, and no patient identifiable information is stored on the system.

**Is my personal data safe?**

Only limited personal data is entered when a patient accesses the video consultation platform. This data is deleted within an hour of your consultation ending. Your consultation will not be recorded, and images will not be not captured.