Using virtual tools to help slow the spread of COVID-19

Virtual care is a vital tool in Ontario's attempts to slow COVID-19.

Emails, text messages, phone consultations and direct-to-patient video visits allow providers and patients to connect safely at a distance, minimizing the risk of infection.

Providers are strongly encouraged to use virtual care whenever possible. Virtual care can help slow the spread of COVID-19, keep patients with manageable symptoms safe from exposure at home, get those who need it the care they require, and help ease the burden on clinics and hospitals across the province.

Virtual care can be used to:

- Screen patients
- Gather patient history, including travel and exposure detail
- Assess symptoms, severity and treatment options
- Monitor progress and check in on patients in isolation
- Communicate with multiple individuals at once, including family members and/or caregivers
- Connect with colleagues to share information and seek additional clinical input/advice

Ontario's Ministry of Health has introduced important measures to encourage wider virtual care adoption across the province. They include:

- Temporary billing codes to allow doctors to bill for all COVID-19-related virtual visits
- Allowing providers to use the virtual-care options and solutions of their choice, including OTN solutions and those of third-party providers

You can access key Information on temporary billing codes and procedures here.

OTN also has online resources to support virtual care implementation and use. These include:

- A COVID-19 information and resource page
- A fact sheet on assessing respiratory symptoms virtually
- Resources for patients

Additional information, including important updates on the evolving COVID-19 situation and symptom-assessment tools are available via:

- Ontario's Ministry of Health
- The Ontario Medical Association
- Local public health units
- The Public Health Agency of Canada

As per Ministry of Health protocols, providers and patients are reminded:

- Patients with COVID-19 symptoms should contact Telehealth Ontario at **1-866-797-0000** or their local public health unit.
- Patients should not visit dedicated COVID-19 assessment centres unless they have symptoms.
- Patients should not call 911 unless it is an emergency.

If you are a care provider and require provincial One ID credentials or technical support, including help with password issues, please contact eHealth Ontario**.**

OTN is committed to working closely with the Ministry of Health and providers across Ontario to deliver care that is as safe and effective as possible. Working together, the well-being of patients and their families—and all Ontarians—remain our No. 1 collective priority.

If you have any questions, please contact OTN at info@otn.ca.