

Most patients in this technology-driven world are likely to be receptive to telemedicine. They may not fully understand the benefits of telemedicine, so take the time to educate them. Help the patient understand how telemedicine can save them time and provide better access to care.

Explain - Telemedicine allows face-to-face visits using audio and video over the internet much like an in-office appointment where symptoms, test results, prescriptions, follow-up care and treatments are discussed. In some cases, clinical assessment tools are used to examine the patient.

Sell - Emphasize the time and expense saved by not having to travel hours away from home. Share positive feedback received from patients who have participated in a telemedicine consultation. Offer to demonstrate how the consult will be conducted prior to the actual appointment. This may help put patients at ease.

Reassure - Always give the patient the option of an in-person visit. Assure the patient that telemedicine consults meet all privacy standards according to the HIPAA law.

Getting Patient Buy-In

Once your platform is up and running, staff is trained, and a mock visit is completed, the next step is to get patient buy-in. The most valuable marketing will come from your staff who regularly interact with the patients; therefore, it is important those individuals understand how and when to talk about telemedicine to patients.

- Discuss insurance coverage prior to scheduling an appointment
- During scheduling, offer telemedicine as a time-saving option, if appropriate
- Offer telemedicine for returning patients and/or post-op patient follow-up appointments
- Have marketing materials available (flyers, brochures and posters)
- Social media can be an easy, inexpensive tool to educate and inform patients about your telemedicine services
- The use of this technology may be of interest to your community, so don't hesitate to contact local media outlets to let them know about your "high-tech" approach to patient care

Telemedicine Etiquette

Telemedicine does not replace face-to-face provider-patient interactions. It's important not to sacrifice professionalism when providing care over a computer or smart device. Here are some things to keep in mind when conducting a telemedicine consult:

- Test the equipment before starting the telemedicine clinic and know who to call for technical assistance
- Make eye contact with the camera to allow for a more intimate encounter
- Avoid disruptions by suggesting children, pets, televisions and other extraneous noise be removed during the video call
- When consulting, keep the background neutral and private to emulate an in-office experience
- Have a system in place that gives you easy and quick access to relevant patient information during the telemedicine encounter
- Wear solid, neutral colors. Avoid fluorescent colors, bright reds, whites and detailed patterns.
- Jewelry should be relatively small and non-distracting
- Be mindful that excessive hand motions can be distracting
- Minimize natural light by not sitting in front of a bright window. If the room is back-lit, the provider or patient will appear dark on camera
- Test the audio to make sure you and your patient can hear each other comfortably
- Always introduce yourself to the patient as if you were in a normal office setting. Let the patient know the role of any staff member(s) who will be involved with the telemedicine visit as well as their affiliation with the provider
- Make sure the patient is aware of any additional staff present who may not be visible on camera
- Observe HIPAA guidelines as you would in a physical clinic
- If the patient is not alone during the consult, ask for verbal consent to discuss sensitive information
- Whenever you are in front of the camera, it is best to assume that you can be seen and heard
- Always mute your microphone while waiting on the patient to join the call
- Formulate a back-up plan with the patient in case of technical difficulties
- In case the patient needs emergency care during the consult:
 - o Know the location of the nearest hospital
 - o Know the EMS provider for the area
 - o Call 911 while remaining connected to the patient

Consider sharing any of these tips with your patients to ensure a positive telemedicine experience.