

HOW TO GET THE MOST OF YOUR VIRTUAL APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR DERMATOLOGIST PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PATIENTS

To keep you safe, most medical offices are limiting in-person visits to emergencies only during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Your doctor may offer you the option of a “virtual” or telemedicine appointment. This may mean a direct internet video connection (for example, Zoom Telehealth) or a telephone consultation (which could include sending photos via the internet). Some skin conditions or problems don’t work well in these formats in which case your appointment may need to be at a later date when public health officials have deemed it safe for you to be seen in person.

HOW IS A VIRTUAL APPOINTMENT DIFFERENT?

- Some parts of a virtual visit can be similar – taking your medical history.
- Some parts will be limited – for example, it would be challenging to do a full skin check on a virtual platform.
- The dermatologist can only “see” what they are shown on the camera or photo and the assessment is limited by the quality of the video image/photo.
- Dermatologists are not able to use their special examination tools during virtual visits or to perform additional diagnostic tests (e.g. swabs, scrapings, Woods lamp, biopsies).

HOW CAN I PREPARE TO HAVE A VIRTUAL APPOINTMENT?

- If you need to send photographs, ensure there is enough time for the physician to receive them before your scheduled visit and take multiple photos.
- In general photos tend to come out better if you are able to have someone who you live with to take your photos for you, rather than holding your camera yourself.
- If you are using a video platform that needs you to sign up, try to set this up before the visit to make sure it works on your computer/tablet/smartphone.
- Try to be in a private and quiet place for the visit that has good lighting.
- Have a list of your current medicines, allergies and medical or surgical conditions. Ask if your doctor wants you to send this information in advance.
- Remember that your dermatologist will typically give you an allotted time for your virtual appointment and will have to manage their time effectively in order to have the ability to provide services to all those that need them

WHAT IF I PREFER NOT TO HAVE A VIRTUAL APPOINTMENT?

- You are not required to do a virtual visit – if you would prefer to wait until the dermatologist is able to see you in-person safely it will not affect your care in any way.
- If you feel that your problem is very urgent please communicate this in advance to the office, and they will help determine how to best proceed.

After your virtual visit, your dermatologist may decide that they need to see you in-person in the office and will arrange for that as needed.