

Virtual appointments are also referred to as “video calls” or “video conferences.” It’s a way to have a face-to-face meeting with a clinician or participate in a support group over the phone or Internet in real time.



## Prepare ahead of time

- Treat a virtual appointment just like you would an in-person one. Try to limit distractions and focus your attention on the discussion.
- It’s helpful to find out in advance what your appointment will be about.
- If this is your very first meeting with a clinician, be prepared to be asked about your medical history. Bring a list of your medications and know the details.
- If you had “homework” from a previous session, remember to do it.
- Jot down your questions and notes so you remember what you want to say. You can also write down your goals or expectations.
- Think about what you will need during your session, such as a pen and paper, a glass of water, cup of coffee, or box of tissues.
- Turn off TVs or music in the room (or other notifications), as they will interfere with the sound of your video call.
- Have a Plan B. If you have an unstable internet connection, for example, let the clinician know how to reach you by telephone just in case.

## Check your tech

- Use the best technology available to you to minimize technical problems.
- Laptop and desktop computers tend to work better than smaller devices such as iPads and mobile phones because they’re more stable and you can use them hands-free.
- If a mobile phone is your only device with a camera, prop it up so it’s stable and the person on the other end has a clear view of your face. (And don’t forget to charge it ahead of time and keep a charge cord handy.)
- Download and test the video conferencing program ahead of time.
- Take some time to familiarize yourself with the program. Online tutorials can be very helpful.
- Practicing with a friend is also a great way to get more comfortable with video conferencing and learn about some useful features (such as the “chat” function in Zoom). It also gives you an opportunity to troubleshoot potential glitches. For example, you might need to close down other programs and windows that are running in the background to get it to work smoothly.
- Log in a few minutes early in case there are some issues with your technology.



## Protect your privacy, and that of others

- Choose a space that is quiet and private – away from where others may hear you – so you can speak freely.
- Think about your meeting environment in other ways to ensure maximum privacy. Turn off any devices that have microphones that may pick up your private conversation. If thin walls are a concern, try to select a room or time that will minimize the chance of others hearing you.
- Check the items that may appear behind you while you are on the video call.
- Let your family or roommate(s) know about your expectation of privacy ahead of time so you aren't interrupted. Consider putting a do not disturb sign on the door.
- Wearing headphones with a built-in microphone might improve your experience.
- Note that privacy is an important consideration for group meetings as well. Do not record group sessions.

## During the video meeting

- Consider what other people are seeing on the call – good lighting makes a big difference. Is there a clear view of your face? Sit beside a window or turn on the lights if needed.
- Some videoconferencing platforms give users the option to turn off the video, and use only audio. Before switching off the video, ask if it's ok. Some people find it off-putting to speak to a "black space" on the screen.
- Keep in mind that talking to people through videoconferencing is different than an in-person meeting. For example, there might be a delay. It's also hard to hear when two people are speaking at the same time.
- Consider keeping your audio muted until it's your turn to speak. This keeps any background noise from distracting from the session. (This could be useful if the only private spot for your video meeting is a balcony that overlooks a busy street, for example.)
- Communicate any fears or concerns you might have to the clinician. (e.g. "That's making me feel a little anxious.")

Virtual meetings and appointments can take some getting used to, but the more you do them, the more comfortable you'll be. If you have technology limitations, problems, questions, or concerns, speak to your clinician.

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