

Attending video consultations in secondary care: Patient FAQs

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Introduction

The Long Term Plan outlines NHS England and NHS Improvement's commitment to transforming outpatient appointments. In April 2019, the Outpatient Transformation Team began a pilot to scale up the use of video consultations for outpatients. This work has rapidly accelerated in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. We are working to rapidly scale-up video consultation capability within NHS trusts and foundation trusts to reduce unnecessary physical attendances.

This document addresses the most commonly asked questions patients may have if they are asked to attend a video consultation in secondary care (an outpatient appointment). Providers can adapt the responses included in this document to support with their communications with patients.

The first section of this document includes the general questions a patient might have about video consultations regardless of the platform they are using. The second section includes platform specific questions that can be adapted by providers depending on the video consultation platform(s) they are using.

The document includes some information that is specific to Attend Anywhere, the video consultation platform nationally funded by NHS England and NHS Improvement to support NHS trusts and foundation trusts adopt in their response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

General FAQs

This section includes questions that patients may have regardless of which video consultation platform their provider is using.

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.

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 arrange another appointment.

You do not have to accept the offer of a video consultation, you will be offered a telephone or face-to-face appointment if that is your preference.

Providers should include information on local support available for patients who are concerned about using video technology.

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.

Some platforms allow multiple users to dial into the same consultation, even if they are not in the same location. You should check with your provider if this functionality is available to you.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: It is possible to invite a third or fourth person into a consultation, even if they are in a different location to you. If you would like to invite a family member, carer, friend or interpreter 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.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: (If the provider has a webpage that includes the 'test call' button) You can do so by completing a 'test call' through our website [add weblink].

(If patients are sent a link directly) You can do so by completing a 'test call' using the web link shared in your appointment letter.

Will I need to download anything?

Providers should include information about whether applications need to be installed or what browsers can be used if using a web-based platform.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: The platform 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?

Providers should explain whether the patients will still be able to access their consultation if they are late and what they need to do to reschedule their appointment if this happens.

Platform Specific FAQs

Providers may wish to develop their own answers to the questions in this section to make them relevant to the platform(s) they are using.

How do I access my video consultation?

Explain:

- how patients will be informed of their appointment, whether this is by letter, text, email or phone call
- how patients will access the platform, whether this is via a web browser or an application.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: The platform can be accessed either on [Google Chrome](#) (for PC/Mac/Android devices) or [Safari](#) (For iOS devices and Macs).

How much data does a video call use?

Outline how much data the video call is likely to use.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: 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?

Outline what the patient should do if they lose connection during their video consultation. Reassure patients that if they have issues with the technology an alternative appointment can be arranged.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: If you lose connection during your call, try clicking the “refresh” button and the consultation will be refreshed. You will not lose

your place in the clinic. If the issue continues you may be asked to continue to an appointment on the telephone instead.

Is the platform secure?

Include information on the security of the platform.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: 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?

Describe what information is and is not stored as part of the consultation and outline what a patient should do if they are concerned that their data has been breached.

For providers using Attend Anywhere: 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.