

Using teledentistry to manage oral health



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, dentists have taken precautions to protect patient health, either by closing their offices temporarily or by establishing certain guidelines for providing care.

You, your dentist and the dental staff need to adapt to new ways of interaction to ensure safety during the pandemic. Dental office teams are focused on infection control, distancing, and wearing personal protective equipment, such as gowns, masks and face shields. By necessity, they may limit visits to urgent or immediate care needs.

If you cannot make an office visit or if you seek a diagnosis to determine your needs, you may have access to services through teledentistry. This new approach enables dentists to have virtual live consultations with patients through videoconferencing or phone applications.

As businesses across the nation use videoconferencing software so teams can continue working, dental offices are integrating this approach to provide personalized care when onsite visits are limited or not feasible.

What is teledentistry?

In teledentistry, your dentist will use phone, text or video to provide a virtual consultation to address your problems and determine if you need to schedule an in-person visit. You can set up an appointment with your dental office, by phone or online, to discuss problems. These visits are billed as visits with problem-focused evaluations.

The American Dental Association has issued guidelines for teledentistry, specifying **patient rights** regarding this delivery of care.

4 steps in using teledentistry services

Check your insurance plan coverage for details on what teledentistry services are included. Delta Dental covers teledentistry services. Your coverage benefits for problem-focused exams would apply.

Once you know you need care delivered remotely, take four action steps:

1. Contact your dental office to find out if teledentistry services are offered, how they are scheduled, and how appointments are set up

What conditions can teledentistry manage?

Your dentist can determine through consultation whether you have an emergency dental problem and can provide instructions on how to treat conditions. If you have a cracked or chipped tooth, soft tissue lesion (bump), small cavity, jaw pain or similar non-emergency condition, a teledentistry consultation through phone or video may work. If you need urgent treatment, it must be scheduled for an onsite visit.

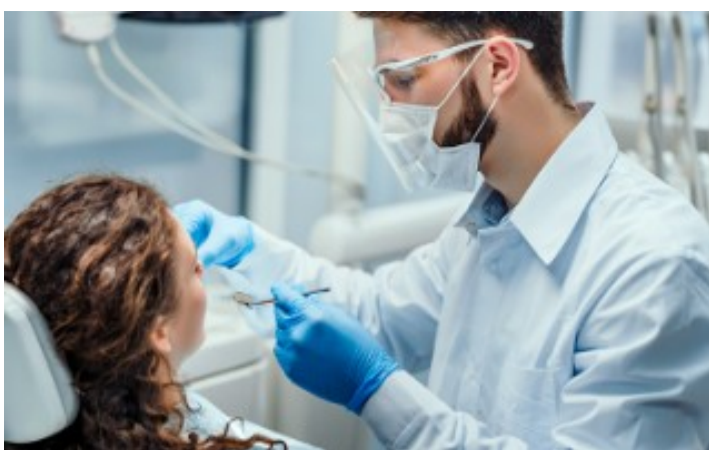
2. Ensure that you have the technology (such as conferencing software or mobile app) for video and audio communication with your dentist.

3. Fill out any required paperwork. This might include an intake form, patient consent and new patient form if it's a first-time meeting.

4. Know your rights as a patient. Educate yourself on Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your health information.

In these challenging times, it's reassuring to know that with teledentistry, you have options when visiting a dental office is not possible or recommended.





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