

# TELEHEALTH: KNOW THE BASICS

**Christopher T. Sneed**, Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

**Ann Berry**, Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

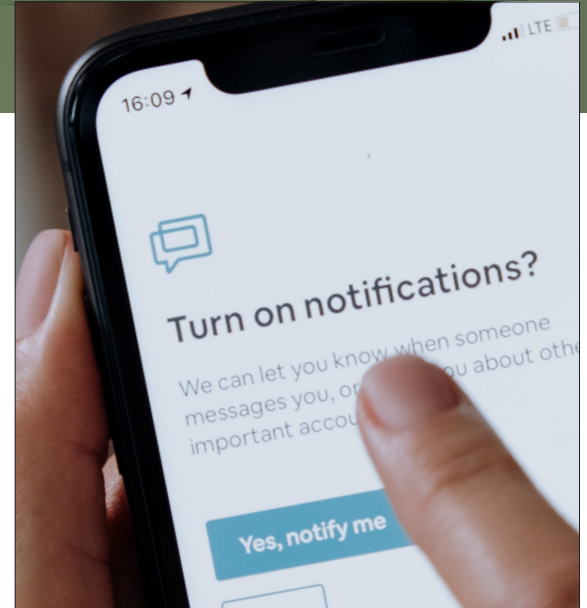
**Barbara Metzger**, Extension Specialist, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

**Lisa Washburn**, Associate Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

**Victoria Niederhauser**, Dean and Professor UT Knoxville College of Nursing

**Karen Franck**, Extension Associate Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

*Telehealth has become more commonplace in health care. If you find yourself with questions about telehealth, this publication is for you. This publication can help you better understand exactly what telehealth is, why it is important and how it works. Learning the basics is your first step.*



## WHAT IS TELEHEALTH? WHAT IS TELEMEDICINE?



While telehealth and telemedicine are often used interchangeably, they do not mean the same thing.

**Telehealth** – Telehealth is a general umbrella term that encompasses all types of health care that are delivered remotely or virtually.

**Telemedicine** – Telemedicine on the other hand refers specifically to virtual consultations between health care provider and patient. You can think of telemedicine as a traditional doctor's appointment except you and the doctor are in different places. Telemedicine is a form of telehealth.

## HOW CAN TELEHEALTH BE USED?



Telehealth can be used in a variety of ways. Some of the more common uses of telehealth include:

**Live interactions via telemedicine:** Live interactions refer to interactions between patient and provider that occur virtually. These interactions are very similar to a traditional doctor's appointment, except you and the doctor are not in the same place.

**Store and Forward:** Unlike live interactions, store and forward involves compiling and transmitting a patient's medical information to another provider – most likely a specialist. The specialist will then be able to review the information and develop a treatment plan.

**Remote Monitoring:** In remote patient monitoring, important data is collected on a patient and then forwarded to a member of the health care team for monitoring and review.

**Mobile Health:** Mobile health is sometimes known as mHealth. It refers to using your mobile device to help manage your care. This might include such activities as texting with your provider or using your mobile device to track your blood sugar or calorie intake.



## WHY IS TELEHEALTH IMPORTANT?

Telehealth has many potential benefits that can enhance patient care. Some of the benefits of telehealth include:

- Telehealth brings the health care provider to you. Thus, it can reduce or eliminate travel times.
- Telehealth can help decrease time taken off work for health care appointments.
- Telehealth may cut down on the need for childcare or elder care.
- Telehealth can expand your access to specialists and other medical professionals whose offices are far away.



- Telehealth may reduce the time you have to wait to consult with a health care provider.
- Telehealth may protect you from potential exposure to other illnesses found in the medical office setting.

While telehealth offers many benefits, it is not for everyone or every situation. Always talk with your health care provider to see if telehealth is right for you and your situation.

## HOW TO GET STARTED

The questions below can help you start a conversation with your health care provider about telehealth:

- **Do you offer telemedicine consultations?**
- **Is telehealth a good option for my current situation?**
- **How do I schedule a telehealth appointment?**
- **What technology will I need?**
- **Will I need to download an app or software?**
- **How will you protect my personal information?**

Finally, be sure to check with your insurance provider to see if telehealth services are covered and what costs you are required to cover (*From: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021*).

## REFERENCES:

Health Resources and Services Administration. [Telehealth.HHS.GOV](https://telehealth.hhs.gov).

Department of Health and Human Services. <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/patients/>

American Telemedicine Association. Telehealth is Health. <https://www.americantelemed.org/>

Aging in Place. Telehealth and Seniors. <https://aginginplace.org/telehealth-and-seniors>

### ***Just a Reminder:***

Not all telemedicine appointments require you to use a computer. You may be able to have your appointment over a phone call. Or, you may be able to access the internet using your phone's data.



 **National Institute of Food and Agriculture**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE**  
KNOXVILLE  
COLLEGE OF NURSING

This work is supported by Rural Health and Safety Education Competitive Grants Program grant no. 2020-46100-32838 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.

  
**INSTITUTE OF  
AGRICULTURE**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

[UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU](http://UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU)

**Real. Life. Solutions.™**