

8

Tips for TELEHEALTH COMMUNICATION

Follow these tips and strategies to help improve communication during telehealth encounters with patients.



1

Be prepared for the telehealth encounter:

- Find a quiet place and reduce any background noises
- Organize all documentation and equipment needed
- Prepare an interpreter and patient materials in their preferred language, as needed
- Set an up-front agenda to guide the telehealth encounter

2 **Confirm patient information and address privacy:**

- Identify yourself and confirm the patient's identity
- Review how to enable privacy features and clear personal data
- If the patient is not in a private setting, propose moving to a more private area and discourage use of speakerphone
- Review confidentiality and assure the patient can trust you

3 **Review the basic functions of the telehealth platform:**

- Explain the purpose of the telehealth appointment
- Demonstrate how to use video, audio, and chat functions
- Teach patient how to send or receive files through the telehealth platform
- Assist patient with troubleshooting as needed

4 **Create a comfortable space and connect with the patient:**

- Build rapport with the patient by being genuine and interacting on a personal level
- Reassure the patient you are there to help and address any questions or concerns
- Acknowledge and validate emotions and stressful situations considering the impact COVID-19 has had on the community
- Allow the patient to ask questions and share resources on the latest CDC recommendations for COVID-19



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(continued)

- 5 Be aware of a patient's cultural beliefs and background:**
- Find out if the patient has any cultural beliefs such as religion, family dynamics, level of acculturation, etc., and discuss how they can impact their health care
 - Understand that the patient may have different perceptions or ideas about healthcare than the provider, and avoid making judgements
 - Be respectful when listening and collecting information from the patient
 - Ask questions when in doubt and avoid making assumptions
- 6 Be aware of patient's health literacy level:**
- Use plain and simple language when explaining health terms
 - Be concise and use short sentences when giving instructions and gather “need to know” information
 - Speak clearly and slowly when prescribing medication and explaining the treatment plan
 - Always check for understanding by using the teach- back method
- Example: The health provider explains to a patient with asthma step by step how to use an inhaler and discusses the benefits of managing the condition. Then, the provider asks the patient to demonstrate how to use the inhaler and explain the benefits of its use. As the patient explains back, the provider can fill any missing details, complementing the learning experience.
- [Click here](#) to know more about “teach-back method”
- 7 Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal communication:**
- Be mindful of your voice tone and messaging to avoid making judgements
 - Maintain eye contact with the patient and nod along to show you are listening
 - Maintain posture, positive gestures, and be aware of your facial expressions
- 8 As you conclude, ensure you have met the patient's needs and provide follow-up steps:**
- Answer final patient questions and review important details
 - Gather feedback about using telehealth platform and ask if anything could be improved
 - Evaluate if the next visit should be in-person
 - Prepare instructions or notes from telehealth encounter and send through patient's preferred channel of communication (email, text, or patient portal)

