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NHS North West

Top tips for Patients: making the most of video and telephone appointments

The way people access healthcare has changed a lot during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One way of accessing an appointment is by using video and telephone appointments. We know for some people, speaking to a doctor, nurse or other healthcare practitioner via video or on the phone can be daunting, to support patients to get the most out their online or phone consultation the following, are some top tips on how best to prepare the technology, environment and yourself for the call.

The environment:

- Find somewhere quiet and private
- Try and limit the distractions around you. Using headphones can help with this.
- Try to have a light on your face so you can be seen and avoid having a window or lights behind you
- Have any hospital or GP letters that you may need with you and a pen and paper to write things down
- Make sure you have a list of your medication to hand in case you are asked

The technology:

- Test any links you have been sent prior to the appointment and familiarise yourself with the platform
- Make sure you have enough battery power and your power cable is plugged in
- When on video calls, check your microphone and camera are working and that you have a good Wi-Fi connection where you are
- When on phone calls, check your signal and move to a place where it is strongest if possible.
Switch to hands free, this will make it easier to take notes of the consultation
- Have a backup plan in mind, should your technology fail



You

Before the call

- Take the time to write down in advance your symptoms and how serious you think they are, the questions you would like answered and the concerns on your mind
- Get ready for the call with plenty of time, don't be rushed
- Try not to book anything straight after the call, in case it runs over time
- Make yourself a drink
- Ask someone for help to set up the technology
- You can ask someone to be with you for support if you would find that useful. This person could even translate or take notes for you
- Ask for a different appointment date or time if the one you have been given isn't convenient for you
- Ask for an interpreter if you need one, as everyone is entitled to one

During the call

- Ask for the person's name, job title and number to call if you lose connection. Write them down so you don't forget
- Tell the person you're speaking to what you would like to get out of the consultation
- Check your questions off the list to make sure you haven't forgotten anything
- Look at the camera to show you are listening, there can sometimes be a delay online so leave a pause to make sure the person has finished speaking
- Repeat at the end of the call what has been agreed. If you're not happy at the end of the consultation, let them know

