

TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF TELEHEALTH

FOR
CLINICIANS
TO PROVIDE
TO YOUNG
PEOPLE

THIS TIP SHEET AIMS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE GET THE MOST OUT OF TELEHEALTH. IT WILL:

- explain what telehealth is;
- discuss the possible benefits of telehealth; and
- give young people some tips for getting the most out of telehealth.

The tips were developed by mental health workers, young people, and researchers. For information for young people on [staying safe on telehealth](#), and information for clinicians on [managing clinical risk in telehealth](#), please refer to the section: Related resources.



WHAT IS TELEHEALTH?

Telehealth lets you attend your health-related appointments over the phone or via videoconferencing (for example Skype, Zoom), instead of having to go to the mental health worker's office. Telehealth is becoming more and more common in mental healthcare, so it's possible that your existing mental health worker might start using telehealth for appointments, that you're already using telehealth, or that you need to start your relationship with a new mental health worker via telehealth.

If you normally meet your mental health worker for face-to-face appointments, you might be wondering if telehealth is very different to this. The short answer is: it depends. Everyone is different. Some people might find that telehealth suits them a bit better than face-to-face appointments. Some people might find they like it a bit less. Others might find it to be about the same.



ARE THERE BENEFITS TO TELEHEALTH?

In general, there is some evidence to suggest that young people tend to be very happy with telehealth, and that there is usually not a big difference in the quality of services delivered this way, compared to face-to-face.⁽¹⁾ Some of the possible benefits of telehealth include:

- making it easier for some young people to access mental healthcare (for example people in rural or remote areas, people with mobility challenges, people with severe anxiety or agoraphobia.);
- providing young people with more choice in who treats them;
- increasing the number of young people who can reach a particular service;
- giving young people more control over their treatment environment, possibly sometimes making it feel more comfortable and less clinical;
- less time, energy and money spent travelling to mental health workers' offices; and
- potentially making the idea of getting treatment feel less daunting.

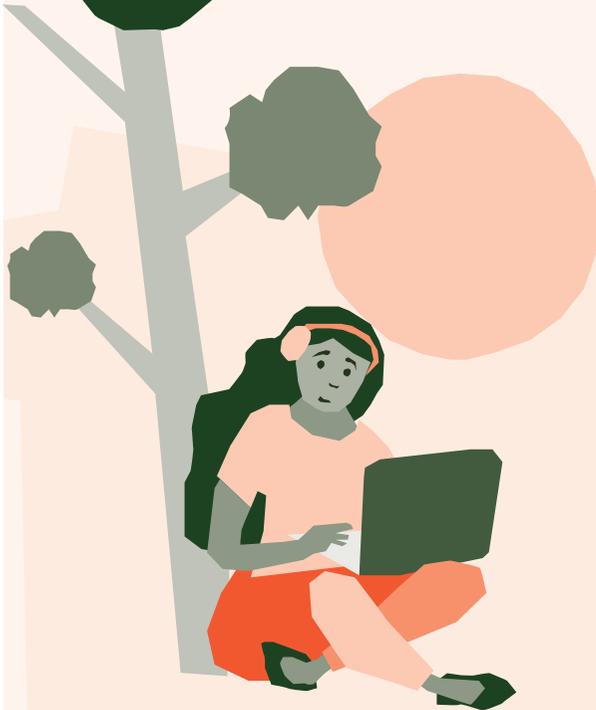
HOW DO I GET THE MOST OUT OF TELEHEALTH?

There are a few ways that telehealth can differ from face-to-face care. This means that if you are thinking about using telehealth, there are a few things that you and your mental health worker might like to consider. Below, we have put together a list of top tips for getting the most out of telehealth.





TIP MAKE SURE YOU CAN SET UP FOR YOUR SESSION IN A SAFE, PREDICTABLE AND PRIVATE SPACE



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

This is important for helping to have open and honest conversations with your mental health worker, which will help them give the best possible advice and care. It is also very important to protect your privacy. You will often need to discuss very personal information with your mental health workers, and if there is a chance someone may be able to overhear your conversation or come into the room while you are speaking with your mental health worker, even if it's just by accident, this might change how comfortable you feel to talk freely.

DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

Having a comfortable, secure space to access telehealth applies to everyone, but what is okay for one person might not be suitable for someone else. For instance, some people might be totally fine with their family or friends overhearing stuff they say in their mental health appointments (you might even invite them to your sessions!) but others might want to be totally private.

WHAT CAN I DO?

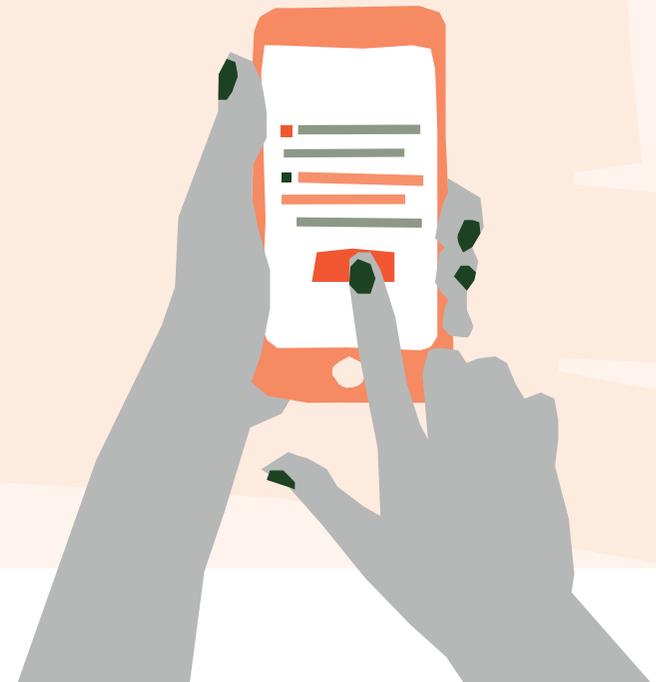
Your mental health worker should always start your telehealth appointment by checking whether you are in a safe and private environment. If they do not do this, always feel free to let them know where you are, especially if it's a different place to where you usually access care. They will be able to give you some ideas on how to work around it, or can shape the session around this information.

If you think it might be tricky for you to set up an uninterrupted, safe and private space where you live, it might be worth thinking about other places you have access to. Consider:

- whether a nearby friend or family member can offer you a private room for your session;
- whether you can book spaces or meeting rooms at a local library, community centre, school, or uni; and
- if there are any very private outdoor spaces nearby that you can use (for example a spot in your favourite park which is never busy, or your car.)

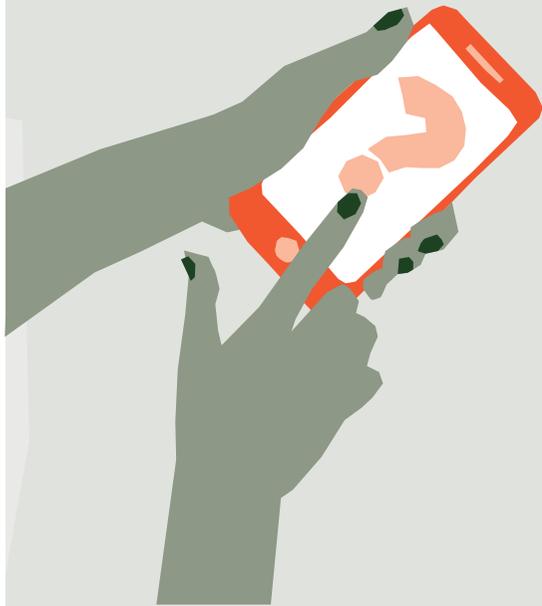
If you're not able to access a private space, let your mental health worker know at the start of the session. This can help them to understand what might be influencing the information you're sharing or just how you're feeling. Other things you can then do to make your session a little more private include:

- using the chat function where available (for example Zoom or Skype chat);
- using headphones and answering private questions with only yes or no responses; or
- emailing or texting your mental health worker the answers to private questions if you can (let them know if you are doing this, and be aware that not all mental health workers will be able to do this).





TIP BE PREPARED FOR TECHNICAL GLITCHES AND DROPOUTS



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

It is very important that you and your mental health worker can communicate clearly so that you can build a good relationship where you feel comfortable to talk about what matters most to you. It is also important that you get the right information at the right times during an appointment.

DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

Although telehealth has a huge number of possible benefits, no system is perfect. In particular, because you'll be using internet or phone connections, it is possible that those connections dropout, or that other technical glitches might interrupt your appointment. This can happen on your end, but it can also happen to your mental health worker.

WHAT CAN I DO?

At the start of your very first telehealth appointment with them, your mental health worker should make a plan with you so that you are both ready if the appointment drops out for any reason. This might mean:

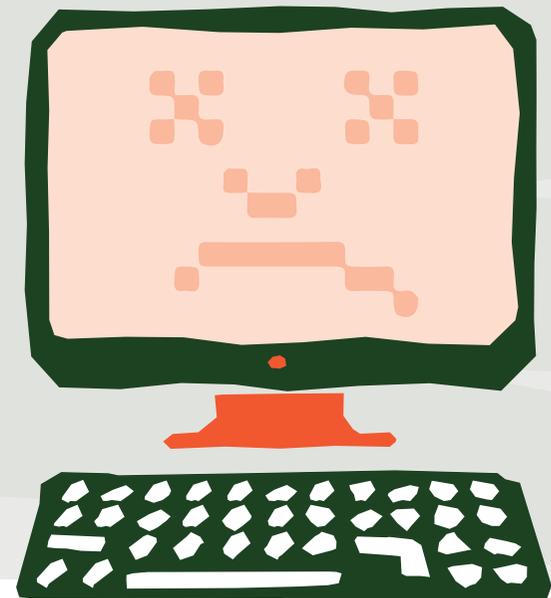
- providing your mental health worker with a different form of contact so they can reach you if something goes wrong (for example your phone number or email.);
- providing your mental health worker with the names and contact details of people close to you, in case something goes wrong and they are not able to reach you.

If you are in the middle of an appointment and experience a dropout or interruption to your connection, some things you can do include:

- trying a different type of connection (for example switching from a phone call to a video call, or a video call to a phone call);
- turning off the video (if it's a video call). This can reduce the amount of strain on the internet until it recovers;

- restarting your computer or phone; and
- restarting your router (if it is an internet issue).

Before you start your first session, you and your mental health worker should decide together on a safety plan including steps you will both take if there are technical issues during an appointment. If one of you does drop out mid-appointment, try to stay in touch with each other as much as possible while you are working through it so that your mental health worker knows what happened, and that you are okay. Your mental health worker might need to call someone else to make sure you're okay if they can't get onto you - but you'll both agree on this plan together, so you know who they will call and why.





TIP YOU MIGHT NEED TO HAVE ACCESS TO A PARTICULAR TYPE OF TECHNOLOGY



Telehealth can be done in a number of different ways, including via a phone call, email, or video conferencing. You and your mental health worker should talk together about the best kind of telehealth for you. It's important to be aware that this might mean you need access to a particular type of technology, such as a computer, landline, mobile phone or smart phone.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

How telehealth is delivered might be important for the quality of care you can receive, depending on you and your mental health worker's needs. Access to private technology might also be important for things like privacy.

DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

Young people who may not have their own phones or computers, or who only have access to phones in public places (for example a corded landline or pay phones) might like to think about this.

WHAT CAN I DO?

You can talk to your mental health worker about what will work in your situation, as well as how they can shape your appointments around what you have access to. If you don't have your own device, there are other ways you might be able to access telehealth, such as:

- borrowing a device from a trusted friend or family member;
- library technology services;
- student IT equity programs (for example at uni or school);
- computer banks; or
- community centres.

It is worth looking into what is available to you in your area. Your mental health worker may be able to make suggestions or help you to research this. If you are using a device that is not your own, you may like to think about ways to help protect your privacy after each session, such as:

- clearing the internet history and/or cookies;
- deleting mental health worker's numbers from call logs; and
- logging out of all applications including Zoom, Skype and emails.





TIP DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE OPEN, HONEST AND FLEXIBLE WITH YOUR COMMUNICATION



DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

Communication is really important in mental health care. The type of communicating you do over telehealth depends on what technology you're using, the quality of the connection, and you and your mental health worker's communication styles.

WHAT CAN I DO?

It is important to always be as open and honest as you can with your mental health worker – even if you feel a little less connected to them via telehealth. You and your mental health worker can work out together what will work best for you. If you find that something is not

working well for you, let your mental health worker know and they can try something else. During an appointment, some things you can both do to make sure you are understanding each other include:

- repeating information back to each other;
- asking each other to explain things again or differently if there is any uncertainty;
- checking in with each other to make sure that key messages were understood correctly; and
- providing each other with feedback after every appointment about how the appointment went and whether anything can be changed next time to make things easier.

Telehealth can feel different to different people. For example, it is possible, depending on the type of telehealth you use, that you find that you and your mental health worker are not able to read each other's body language (for example gestures and expression) as easily. It might also sometimes be more difficult to hear and understand each other, depending on the connection and audio quality.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

It's important to build a trusting relationship with your mental health worker as this can help you both to feel safe and comfortable to share openly, and to work together towards your goals.





TIP TREAT A TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENT LIKE YOU WOULD TREAT A FACE-TO-FACE APPOINTMENT

Even though you aren't physically going into a mental health worker's office, it's important to treat a telehealth appointment the same way you would treat a face-to-face appointment. This will mean that you and your mental health worker get the most value out of it. Things you might need to think about include:

- being on time for appointments;
- giving your mental health worker enough notice if you need to cancel an appointment. Your mental health worker will usually let you know how much notice they require for appointment cancellations - this still applies to telehealth appointments;
- avoid taking substances (for example drugs or alcohol) before or during appointments;
- try to avoid having distractions available to you during an appointment. For example, if you are able, make sure the TV is turned off, your phone is off or on silent, and all other internet tabs and apps (for example social media sites and shopping sites) are closed during your appointment. This will make sure that you are able to be as engaged as possible with the appointment and able to get as much as possible out of it.



AT THE END OF THE DAY ...

In heaps of ways, telehealth is not that different to in-person care. At the end of the day, your mental health worker can help to make you feel comfortable and safe to talk about whatever is on your mind. They are there to help you and won't judge you.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Centre for Clinical Interventions, Government of Western Australia. [Self help resources for mental health problems.](#)

RELATED RESOURCES

Toolkit.

[Getting the most out of telehealth: tips for young people.](#)

Clinical practice point.

[Managing clinical risk in telehealth: tips for clinicians.](#)

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Orygen acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands we are on and pays respect to their Elders past and present. Orygen recognises and respects their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationships to their ancestral lands, which continue to be important to First Nations people living today.



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