

Virtual Care Statement For Patients

COVID-19 is placing stress on Canada's public health system. The Northumberland Family Health Team is starting to offer virtual care to make sure that we can continue to care for our patients safely and effectively. This means that we will be using electronic communications for some patient visits rather than asking all patients to come into our offices.

Some of these technologies are provided by the Province of Ontario. Others have been provided by vendors such as Doxy, Google, or Apple to help make discussions with your care provider as easy as possible during these difficult times. Some health concerns can be addressed with virtual care alone, but in some cases your doctor may ask you to visit a hospital or other health-care facility, if necessary, for a physical examination.

The NFHT will do our best to make sure that any information you give to us during virtual care visits is private and secure, but no electronic communications tools (such as audio, video, email, text) are ever completely secure. There is an increased security risk that your health information may be intercepted or disclosed to third parties when using such electronic communications tools. To help us keep your information safe and secure, you can:

- Understand that electronic communications (such as audio, video, email, text) you receive are not secure in the same way as a private appointment in an exam room.
- Use a private computer/device (i.e., not an employer's or third party's computer/device), secure accounts, and a secure internet connection. For example, your access to the Internet on your home network will generally be more secure than an open guest Wi-Fi connection.

You should also understand that virtual care is not a substitute for in-person communication or clinical examinations, where appropriate, or for going to an Emergency Department when needed (including for any urgent care that may be required).

If you are concerned about using electronic communications for virtual care, you can ask our office to attempt to arrange a potential alternative. However, please note that visiting a health care provider in person comes with a higher risk of coming into contact with COVID-19 and the possibility of spreading the virus.

By providing your information, you agree to let us collect, use, or disclose your personal health information through video, audio, email, or text communications (while following applicable privacy laws) to provide you with care. In particular, the following means of electronic communication may be used: audio, video (including DOXY, SLACK), email, or text.