

Virtual Care Information:

COVID-19 is placing stress on Canada's public health system. Our hospital 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 video and audio technologies for some patient visits rather than asking all patients to come into the hospital. Some of these technologies are provided by the province 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, or health care provider may ask you to visit a hospital or other health care facility if necessary.

Many hospital programs will be utilizing Ontario Telemedicine Network PCVC (Personal Videoconferencing Service) or 'REACTS'. These are virtual care software programs that comply with security and privacy laws and regulations (The Personal Health Information Protection Act, PHIPA).

However, some care providers may opt to use other methods such as text, email or phone calls. We do our best to make sure that any information you give to us during these care visits is private and secure. However, there is an increased security risk that your health information may be intercepted or disclosed to third parties when using these methods to communicate. To help us keep your information safe and secure, you can:

- Understand that emails, calls, or texts 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, using a personal and encrypted email account is more secure than an unencrypted email account, and 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 electronic communication is not a substitute for in-person communication or clinical examinations, where appropriate, or for attending the Emergency Department when needed (including for any urgent care that may be required).

If you are concerned about using video or audio tools for virtual care, you can discuss your concerns with our staff, and we will do our best to offer solutions and increase your comfort level with using virtual care. 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 or audio communications (while following applicable privacy laws) in order to provide you with care. In particular, the following means of virtual communication may be used: email, text messaging, phone calls, 'REACTS' and or the Ontario Telemedicine Network PCVC (Personal Videoconferencing Service)