

Virtual Appointment Guide



Digital technologies offer a number of opportunities for physicians and patients to enjoy a better healthcare experience and achieve better results. This new kind of appointment is happening more often, so patients and clinicians need to ensure that they're getting the most out of this new type of appointment.

Our guide to virtual appointments looks at preparing for the call, the call itself, and the outcomes. The guide is aimed to ensure patients are comfortable with their appointments and confident in their treatment pathway.

Before your appointment

Remember - this is your time, use the time, don't rush

| Prepare yourself | Prepare your space | Prepare your tools |
|--|---|--|
| Take some time to think about how/if your symptoms have changed since your last appointment. | Prepare a comfortable space away from distractions to take the call. | Prepare the tools, equipment and information you need for the phone call in advance of the call. |
| Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I want to get out of this call? • What do I need to tell the doctor about? • Do you want a friend or family member present? • Details of current medication and clinicians who prescribed them. | Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy • Comfort • Confidence • Lighting | Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes from last appointment • Phone/laptop fully charged • Headphones working (if applicable) • Pen and paper to hand • If it's a video call, make sure the camera is a suitable height. |
| Top Tip Go through our Symptoms Tracker and note how each symptom is now. | Top Tip Create a comfortable space for the call but wait for the call away from it. Be ready to take the call 15 minutes before or after the agreed time. | Top Tip Rehearse your call in the days leading up to the appointment with a friend or loved one. |

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On the call

Remember - be comfortable, speak clearly and ask questions

| Your symptoms | Yourself | Your pathway |
|--|--|---|
| Reflect on how your symptoms have changed since you last spoke to your clinician. Write down any questions you have regarding them. | Reflect on how you feel physically and mentally. | Reflect on where you are on your treatment pathway. |
| Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think about if you've modified any behaviours• How, when and where are you sleeping?• If you are breathless, when does this happen and at what exertion?• Are any regular activities becoming harder?• Are your symptoms affecting your sexual activity? | Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in heart rate or blood pressure since last appointment.• Changes in your weight• Changes in your eating habits• Changes in your behaviour pattern• If you feel anxious, when does this happen and about what?' | Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How severe is your condition?• When should you be discussing treatment options?• When are you likely to need treatment?• What rehab should you be considering? |
| Top Tip <p>Be open, be honest and think critically.</p> | Top Tip <p>Talk about your health with someone you're close to. Sometimes you don't notice subtle changes.</p> | Top Tip <p>Write down exactly where you are on your treatment plan and why, so you have a record of it.</p> |

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How to end the call

Remember - this is your time, make the most of it

| You're confident | You know what's next | You know who to contact |
|--|---|---|
| Make sure you are completely clear about your treatment plan. | Make sure you know when your next appointment is and what it is in regards for. | Who do you contact if something changes? And how? |
| Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeat back to the clinician what you have learnt during this session• Tell them what you're going to do over the coming weeks/months.• Ask questions if you're unclear. | Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When is your next appointment?• Do you need any follow up care?• Where and how will the appointment take place? | Things to Consider <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is your key contact?• How are you monitoring changes?• When can you contact them? |
| Top Tip <p>Give feedback. Let the team know what went right, what could be improved and if there are any ways the team can support your future digital consultations.</p> | Top Tip <p>Use our Symptom Tracker to monitor your symptoms. If you notice any deteriorations, report them to your primary contact immediately.</p> | Top Tip <p>Call your primary contact and introduce yourself. Save their number on your phone, a loved ones phone, and write it down and keep it somewhere safe and easy to find.</p> |

Notes

Remember

This is a new style of consultation, so most importantly, have patience with the process.

If you are not comfortable with technology or find that it's difficult to communicate naturally with the care team, ask a trusted relative or friend to help troubleshoot any technical issues, or to sit in on future appointments to smooth over any communication issues due to connectivity issues.

While it may seem scary at first, this new style of appointment could provide convenient access to medical care when you need it most.

Preparing for delays to treatment

COVID-19 has placed an extraordinary strain on our NHS, leading to the cancellation of some heart valve disease treatments due to bed and staff shortages. If you experience delays, it's important to know your symptoms, your lines of communication and your care plan.

Remember: NHS staff are doing all they can under immense pressure, so be considerate, be polite, and know that despite the cancellation they are still here to help you when you need them.

| Your symptoms | Your communication | Your care |
|--|---|---|
| Make sure you and your clinician are completely clear about where your symptoms are and what you should do if things change. | Make sure you have a communication plan in place with your care team and you know who to contact and when. | Continuity of care is crucial. Make sure you and your care team have an interim care plan that suits you and your circumstances. |
| <p>Things to Consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you going to monitor your symptoms? • What do you do if something changes? • How are your symptoms at this moment compared to 3 months ago? • Are any everyday activities becoming harder? • How is your mental health? | <p>Things to Consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is your primary contact if you need support? • When will you next be contacted? • If you need to speak to someone, when is the best time to call them? • Who do you contact in case of emergency? | <p>Things to Consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you understand your treatment plan? • Do you have sufficient medication for the upcoming weeks? • Do you require any additional care because of your symptoms? • If you need to shield, do you require additional support? |
| <p>Top Tip</p> <p>Download Heart Valve Voice's Symptom Tracker and monitor your symptoms closely. If they change, call your clinical team and tell them immediately.</p> | <p>Top Tip</p> <p>Keep a list of contacts and their availability near the phone. Make a copy of the list and give it to someone close to you, explaining who each person is and when to call.</p> | <p>Top Tip</p> <p>Make an interim care plan that plans for every eventuality. 1 month, 3 months, 6 months. Good planning will make the process easier.</p> |

Notes

Important

If your treatment has been delayed, email info@heartvalvevoice.com and join our #JustTreatUs campaign by telling us your story or emailing your MP.