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## **The Complete Guide to Telehealth Doctors in Australia: Your Trusted Resource for Navigating Modern Healthcare from Anywhere**

Telehealth has dramatically changed the way Australians access healthcare. What was once viewed as a temporary fix during unprecedented times, it’s now firmly established as a core, indispensable part of how we look after our health — and it’s undeniably here to stay.

For millions of Australians, the ability to talk to a doctor from the comfort of their own home has evolved from a mere convenience into a genuine necessity. Whether you’re diligently managing a chronic illness, residing in a bustling regional town far from major hospitals, or simply prefer the ease of skipping the traditional waiting room experience, telehealth seamlessly places high-quality healthcare right at your fingertips. It transforms your living room, office, or even your caravan into a private consultation space.

In this in-depth guide, we’ll meticulously explore exactly how telehealth operates within Australia’s unique healthcare system. We'll uncover why it’s become such a profound game-changer for both patients and practitioners, helping you understand when it’s truly the right choice for your needs (and, importantly, when it's not). We’ll walk you through the process of finding reputable doctors online, demystify costs and Medicare rebates, provide essential tech tips for a smooth connection, outline crucial privacy considerations, and even offer a glimpse into the exciting future of virtual care.

Let’s dive in and unlock the full potential of connected health.

### **What Exactly is Telehealth? Demystifying Remote Healthcare**

Put simply, telehealth is the delivery of healthcare services from a distance, using various digital tools to connect patients with medical professionals. Instead of the traditional in-person visit to a doctor’s office or clinic, you engage remotely, leveraging technology to receive advice, diagnoses, prescriptions, and follow-up care.

In Australia, this remote connection primarily involves several key formats:

* **Video Consultations:** This is perhaps the most familiar form, where you connect with your doctor via a live video call using a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer equipped with a camera and microphone. The visual element is a significant advantage here, allowing a doctor to perform a virtual "visual assessment" – for example, examining a skin rash, observing a visible injury, or assessing general appearance and demeanour. This visual interaction often mirrors a face-to-face visit more closely.
* **Phone Consultations:** Often referred to simply as a "phone consult," this involves speaking with a doctor over a mobile or landline phone. While it lacks the visual component, it's an incredibly accessible and convenient option, particularly well-suited for straightforward discussions, reviewing test results, follow-up appointments, or managing repeat prescriptions where a visual check isn't essential.
* **Secure Messaging Systems:** While not typically used for initial diagnosis or prescribing (which require real-time conversation in Australia), secure messaging can facilitate follow-up communication, sending additional information, or receiving administrative updates from your healthcare provider.

Beyond these common real-time interactions, telehealth in Australia is also expanding to include other innovative approaches:

* **Store-and-Forward Services:** This involves the secure transmission of medical information – such as high-resolution images of a skin lesion, specialist reports, or complex test results – from one healthcare provider to another (or from a patient to a provider) for review at a later time. A specialist might review images sent by a GP and provide a diagnosis or management plan without a live patient interaction.
* **Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM):** Increasingly, telehealth encompasses the use of wearable devices or home health tech that automatically measure and transmit health metrics like blood pressure, blood glucose levels, heart rate, or oxygen saturation. This data is sent securely to your doctor or healthcare team for continuous monitoring, allowing for proactive adjustments to care plans and early intervention if health markers change.

Regardless of the specific format, the core purpose of telehealth remains the same: to make quality healthcare more accessible, efficient, and integrated into your life.

### **Why Telehealth is Booming in Australia: A Game-Changer for Modern Healthcare**

Telehealth hasn't simply grown in popularity; it has truly exploded because it directly addresses several longstanding and complex challenges inherent in Australian healthcare. Let’s unpack why so many Australians – and indeed, healthcare professionals themselves – are wholeheartedly embracing this modern approach.

#### **Unprecedented Accessibility**

Australia's vast geographical spread means healthcare access isn't equally distributed. For people residing in regional and remote communities, facing a GP or specialist used to mean confronting significant barriers: hours of driving, prohibitive travel costs, and time away from work or family. Telehealth fundamentally bridges this distance, ensuring that high-quality care is available wherever you live, whether you're on a remote farm or in a bustling regional hub.

Beyond geography, its accessibility extends to:

* **Individuals with limited mobility:** For those who find physical travel challenging due to age, disability, or illness, telehealth removes a major hurdle.
* **Those who rely on public transport:** It eliminates the need to navigate complex routes and schedules.
* **Parents juggling childcare commitments:** Fitting an appointment between school runs or naps becomes far more manageable.
* **Busy professionals with tight schedules:** A virtual appointment can be slotted into a lunch break or between meetings without disrupting the workday.

With telehealth, healthcare comes directly to you – not the other way around.

#### **Unmatched Time and Convenience**

Think for a moment about all the hidden costs of a traditional doctor's visit: the time spent travelling to a clinic, the frustration of finding parking, and then the often-lengthy wait in the reception area for your turn. Telehealth systematically removes these hurdles.

Millions of patients now deeply appreciate how seamlessly a virtual appointment integrates into their daily lives. Whether it's a quick chat between meetings, a consult during a lunch break, or a specialist review after the kids are in bed, the flexibility is profound. For individuals managing ongoing health conditions, this ease of access makes sticking to regular check-ups and follow-ups far simpler, leading to better long-term health adherence.

#### **Enhanced Continuity of Care**

Effective management of chronic diseases, ongoing mental health support, and post-surgical follow-ups all require consistent, ongoing communication with your healthcare team. Traditionally, long gaps between in-person visits could sometimes lead to delayed interventions or a lack of timely support.

Telehealth excels at maintaining these vital connections. Regular virtual check-ins mean that symptoms can be monitored, medications reviewed, and care plans adjusted promptly, often preventing minor issues from escalating. That consistent, unbroken continuity leads directly to better health outcomes and a reduction in preventable emergencies.

#### **Transformative Mental Health Support**

Perhaps nowhere has telehealth proven more profoundly impactful than in the realm of mental health services. It has truly been a game-changer for both patients and practitioners.

* **Comfort and Openness:** For many, the ability to open up and discuss deeply personal mental health concerns feels significantly easier and safer from the familiar, private confines of their own home. This can reduce anxiety associated with visiting a clinic.
* **Reduced Stigma:** Others deeply appreciate avoiding the perceived stigma sometimes associated with waiting-room visits for psychological or psychiatric support. The discreet nature of virtual care empowers more individuals to seek the help they need.
* **Expanded Access to Expertise:** Virtual care has dramatically expanded access to a wider pool of psychologists, psychiatrists, and mental health counsellors across Australia, allowing patients to find the right therapeutic match regardless of their geographical location.

#### **Improved Safety and Infection Control**

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth played an absolutely critical role in safeguarding public health by drastically reducing virus transmission. It minimised physical contact in healthcare settings, protecting both vulnerable patients and frontline healthcare workers. But even beyond the pandemic, virtual care remains incredibly valuable during seasonal outbreaks like flu season, or for vulnerable patients who are immunocompromised and need to avoid any potential exposure to infections in crowded waiting areas. It's a proactive measure that enhances patient safety year-round.

#### **Potential Cost Savings**

While it’s true that telehealth consultations still carry fees (just like their in-person counterparts), many people find themselves saving money in less obvious, yet significant, ways. Consider the immediate savings on travel expenses, the elimination of parking fees, and the potential reduction in lost income due to time off work. With growing Medicare support and increasing coverage from private health insurance providers, telehealth is becoming an increasingly accessible and financially viable option for more Australians.

### **When Telehealth is Appropriate — and When It’s Not**

Telehealth is an incredibly versatile tool in modern medicine, offering convenience and access for a wide array of health concerns. However, it’s crucial to understand that it’s not a universal solution suitable for every medical situation. Knowing how to decide if it’s the right choice for you is key to effective and safe care.

#### **Telehealth is a Good Fit For:**

Think of telehealth as your go-to for many routine, non-urgent, and follow-up healthcare needs. It excels when the primary need is a discussion, review, or visual assessment without direct physical contact. This includes:

* **Routine follow-ups or ongoing care** for stable, well-managed conditions like stable diabetes, controlled hypertension, or ongoing asthma management.
* **Mental health consultations** with psychologists, psychiatrists, or counsellors, where the therapeutic relationship is built through conversation.
* **Repeat prescriptions** for medications you’ve been taking long-term, provided a clinical review confirms ongoing need and safety.
* **Discussing blood test results, scans, or imaging reports**, where the doctor interprets the findings and advises on next steps.
* **General health advice or questions** about minor symptoms, preventative care, or lifestyle adjustments.
* **Minor skin issues** that are clearly visible over a video call, such as rashes, acne, or a visible insect bite (though complex skin lesions might still need an in-person review).
* **Post-surgical reviews** that primarily involve discussing recovery, pain management, or wound appearance, and don't require physical examination or dressing changes.
* **Management of chronic diseases** where a physical exam isn't immediately critical, focusing on symptom management and medication adjustments.

Many clinics now embrace a **hybrid care model**, seamlessly combining telehealth with in-person visits. This flexible approach allows patients and doctors to choose the most suitable type of care for each specific situation, ensuring comprehensive and personalised healthcare.

#### **When You Should See a Doctor in Person:**

While telehealth has broad applications, certain situations unequivocally demand an in-person consultation or immediate emergency care. Your safety is paramount, and your telehealth doctor will always advise you to seek face-to-face care if needed. Always head to a clinic or emergency department for:

* **Medical emergencies:** This is non-negotiable. If you're experiencing severe symptoms like sudden chest pain, acute shortness of breath, severe bleeding, sudden paralysis, or major injuries, **always call 000 immediately** or go to your nearest emergency department. Telehealth is not for crisis situations.
* **New, complex, or worsening symptoms needing physical assessment:** If you have unexplained abdominal pain, a new lump, a suspected fracture, or symptoms requiring palpation (feeling with hands), listening (with a stethoscope), or detailed physical manipulation (e.g., for joint issues), an in-person visit is essential.
* **Procedures, vaccinations, injections, or wound care:** Any medical intervention that requires direct physical contact, specialised equipment, or sterile technique – such as stitches, flu shots, or changing dressings – must be done in a clinic.
* **Situations where you simply prefer a personal face-to-face discussion:** For some, the comfort and rapport of an in-person interaction are preferred, especially for sensitive discussions or if they feel more at ease in a traditional setting.

### **How to Find a Trusted Telehealth Doctor in Australia**

Finding a qualified and reputable telehealth doctor in Australia has become incredibly straightforward, with multiple reliable pathways available to connect you with care.

#### **Ask Your Regular GP or Specialist**

Your first and often best starting point is your existing healthcare provider. If you have a regular doctor or a specialist you typically see, reach out to them first. Many traditional clinics across Australia have now integrated telehealth into their service offerings for their established patients. This is often the smoothest and most beneficial path because your doctor already possesses your detailed medical history, understands your ongoing health needs, and has an established relationship with you, ensuring strong continuity of care.

#### **Explore Dedicated Telehealth Services**

If you don't have a regular doctor, are travelling, or need an appointment quickly outside of your usual clinic's hours, several reputable online services specialise in connecting you with Australian-registered doctors, even if you’re a new patient. These platforms are designed for efficiency and broad access. Some popular and trusted platforms include:

* Instant Consult
* TeleDoc Australia
* Phenix Health
* 24-7 MedCare
* Medicly

These services commonly offer a comprehensive suite of features, including:

* Flexible **video or phone consultations**.
* The ability to issue **prescriptions** (including e-scripts).
* Provision of **medical certificates** for work or study.
* Issuance of **specialist referrals** for further investigation.

Many of these platforms offer streamlined online booking systems, allowing you to secure an appointment, often on the same day, with just a few clicks.

#### **Use Government Resources**

The Australian Government provides excellent resources to help you navigate the healthcare system, including telehealth options:

* The **Healthdirect website** (run by Services Australia) features a user-friendly “Find a health service” tool. You can search for local practitioners across Australia and easily filter the results specifically to find those offering telehealth services. This is a reliable way to discover accredited clinics.
* Healthdirect also offers a free **24-hour nurse line (1800 022 222)**, which can provide initial advice and help you determine if telehealth is appropriate for your symptoms, or if you should seek in-person care.

#### **Check Credentials and Security Before Booking**

Before you commit to a telehealth appointment with any new provider, a few crucial checks will help ensure you receive quality and secure care:

* **Confirm Registration:** Always verify that the doctor or clinician is registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). You can do this quickly by searching their public register online. This ensures they are qualified and accountable.
* **Review Privacy & Security:** Scrutinise the provider’s privacy policies and their stated security measures. Look for assurances that they use secure, encrypted platforms for consultations and that your health records are stored securely, ideally on servers located in Australia, in compliance with Australian privacy laws.
* **Understand Costs:** Clearly understand the consultation fees, whether Medicare rebates apply to your situation, and if there are any potential "gap fees" (the difference between the doctor's fee and the Medicare rebate).
* **Operating Hours & Availability:** Check if their operating hours align with your needs, especially if you require after-hours or weekend appointments.
* **Read Patient Reviews:** Take a moment to read patient reviews on Google or independent health forums. This can offer valuable insights into other people's experiences with the provider's service, communication, and technical reliability.

Choosing a registered, reputable provider who prioritises both clinical excellence and robust data security is the safest and most effective way to ensure you receive high-quality telehealth care.

### **How Much Does Telehealth Cost? Demystifying Fees and Medicare Rebates**

Understanding the financial aspects of telehealth is straightforward once you know the basics. Costs can vary depending on the provider you choose (e.g., a GP versus a specialist), the specific type of service you receive, and the duration of your consultation.

#### **Private Fees**

For privately billed telehealth consultations, the fees typically range from **$45 to $75 for a standard appointment**. Longer consultations or those with specialists will usually incur higher charges. When a service is privately billed, you pay the full fee to the clinic directly.

#### **Bulk Billing**

A significant benefit for many Australians is the option of **bulk-billed telehealth services**. This means that Medicare covers the full cost of your consultation, leaving you with **no out-of-pocket fee**. Some GPs and clinics offer bulk-billed telehealth, particularly for:

* **Concession card holders** (e.g., Pensioner Concession Card, Health Care Card).
* **Children under 12 months** of age.
* Certain **specific services**, such as some mental health consults delivered under a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan.

It's always essential to **confirm whether your telehealth service is bulk billed** for your specific circumstances before booking your appointment.

#### **Medicare Rebates: What You Need to Know**

Telehealth is now a permanent and integrated part of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). This means that for many services, you can claim a Medicare rebate, which will partially cover the cost of your consultation.

However, a key condition for most GP telehealth items is the **"existing and continuous relationship" rule**. Generally, to claim a Medicare rebate for a GP telehealth consultation, you need to have seen that particular doctor or another doctor at the same physical practice in person within the last 12 months. This rule encourages continuity of care with your usual GP.

Important exceptions to this rule apply to ensure that vulnerable patients and those in urgent need can still access care:

* **Babies under 12 months.**
* **People experiencing homelessness.**
* Those needing **urgent after-hours care** (when your regular GP is closed).
* Patients registered with a **MyMedicare practice** (for specific long phone consultations).
* Certain services for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients**.

Before booking any telehealth appointment, it's wise to:

* Confirm if your specific consultation qualifies for a Medicare rebate.
* Understand how much the rebate covers versus any potential **"gap fees"** (this is the out-of-pocket difference between the doctor's fee and the Medicare rebate amount).

The Services Australia website is your most reliable source for the most up-to-date information on MBS telehealth item numbers and eligibility criteria.

### **Tech Essentials for a Smooth Telehealth Appointment**

One of the reasons telehealth has become so widely successful and accessible in Australia is its minimal technology requirements. Most people already have everything they need right at their fingertips.

#### **What You’ll Need:**

* **A device:** A smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer. The crucial part is that it has a **built-in camera and microphone**.
* **Internet Connection:** A stable internet connection is essential, especially for video calls. While exact speeds can vary, a reliable connection of at least 384 kbps for both upload and download is generally recommended to ensure clear audio and video.
* **A private space:** Find a private, quiet space where you won’t be disturbed during your consultation. This helps maintain confidentiality and allows you to focus.
* **Audio Gear:** Headphones or good quality speakers will ensure you can hear your doctor clearly, and a functioning microphone is vital for them to hear you.
* **Compatible Browser/App:** Most telehealth services work seamlessly through common web browsers like Google Chrome or Safari. Some larger services may have their own dedicated apps that you'll need to download.

#### **Before Your Appointment: A Quick Checklist**

A little preparation goes a long way to ensure your virtual visit is seamless and productive:

* **Test Your Tech:** Before your appointment, take a few minutes to test your camera, microphone, and internet connection. This simple step can prevent last-minute stress.
* **Gather Your Details:** Have your Medicare card and any private health insurance details handy. Also, prepare a concise list of your current medications, known allergies, or a detailed description of your symptoms.
* **Jot Down Questions:** It’s incredibly easy to forget things once the conversation starts, so write down any questions or concerns you want to ask your doctor.
* **Home Readings:** If you use home medical devices (like a thermometer, blood pressure cuff, or blood glucose meter), keep them nearby in case your doctor asks for readings during the consult.

Remember, if technology does happen to fail during your appointment, most reputable providers have contingency plans. They can typically switch quickly to a phone call to complete your consultation or reschedule if a thorough assessment isn't possible, ensuring you still receive the care you need.

### **Privacy and Security in Telehealth: Protecting Your Health Information**

Privacy is an absolute cornerstone of reputable telehealth services in Australia. The law is very strict about protecting your personal and sensitive health information, ensuring your digital medical interactions are as secure as any in-person visit.

#### **Key Protections:**

* **Strong Legislation:** The **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)**, along with state or territory privacy laws, provides a robust framework that meticulously regulates how health information is collected, stored, used, and shared by healthcare providers.
* **Encrypted Platforms:** All video consultations, and often phone calls, are conducted over secure, encrypted platforms. This means your conversation and any data exchanged are protected from unauthorised access, ensuring confidentiality.
* **Identity Verification:** Doctors are mandated to confirm your identity (and verify theirs) at the start of each session. This crucial step prevents misidentification and ensures your medical information is only discussed with you.
* **Secure Record Keeping:** Your health records and notes from your telehealth consultations are stored securely within compliant systems, adhering to strict Australian health record regulations.
* **Informed Consent:** Doctors must obtain your explicit consent before collecting your health information or, importantly, before recording any part of a session.

#### **Your Role in Maintaining Privacy:**

While telehealth providers have robust systems in place, you also play a vital part in safeguarding your data and ensuring your privacy:

* **Avoid Public Wi-Fi:** Wherever possible, avoid using public Wi-Fi networks (like those in cafes or airports) for telehealth consultations. These networks can be less secure. Opt for a private, password-protected home network or a secure mobile data connection.
* **Share Information Wisely:** Only share your personal and health information through the secure platform provided by your trusted telehealth provider. Be wary of sharing sensitive details over unencrypted email or standard messaging apps.
* **Review Privacy Policies:** Before booking, take a few moments to review the provider’s privacy policy. Understanding how your data is handled can offer significant peace of mind.
* **Verify Suspicious Communications:** If you receive unusual emails, text messages, or phone calls claiming to be from your telehealth provider, and something feels "off," contact your clinic directly using a known phone number (from their official website) to confirm legitimacy. Never click on suspicious links.

### **The Future of Telehealth in Australia: Evolving Connected Care**

Telehealth is far more than just a convenient service born out of a pandemic. It's a dynamic, evolving cornerstone of Australia’s healthcare future, constantly integrating new technologies and service models to enhance patient care. Here’s what’s on the horizon:

#### **Hybrid Care Models: The Best of Both Worlds**

We're seeing a growing trend towards more clinics blending in-person and virtual appointments into sophisticated **hybrid care models**. This flexible approach means patients and doctors can collaboratively choose the most suitable type of care for each specific situation. A routine follow-up might be virtual for convenience, while a complex new symptom leads to an advised in-person exam. This seamless integration promises truly holistic and patient-centred care.

#### **Remote Patient Monitoring: Proactive Health Management**

The widespread adoption of wearable devices and home health technology will increasingly allow doctors to monitor patients' vital signs and health metrics remotely. Imagine:

* Your **blood pressure** readings from your home cuff being automatically shared with your GP.
* **Blood glucose levels** for diabetes management streaming directly to your endocrinologist.
* **Heart rhythms** flagged instantly by your smartwatch for early detection of arrhythmias.
* **Oxygen levels** tracked for respiratory conditions.

This continuous flow of real-time data empowers individuals with chronic conditions to stay healthier, allows for proactive adjustments to medication, and can significantly reduce unplanned hospital admissions by catching issues early. It gives you and your doctor a much more continuous and detailed picture of your health between visits.

#### **Artificial Intelligence (AI): Supporting, Not Replacing, Clinicians**

Artificial Intelligence is beginning to play a supportive role in healthcare, with cautious yet promising applications in telehealth. AI is starting to:

* **Help triage symptoms:** Providing initial guidance or directing patients to the most appropriate level of care based on reported symptoms.
* **Draft clinical notes for doctors:** Streamlining administrative tasks and freeing up valuable time for direct patient interaction.
* **Offer mental health support tools:** Providing guided exercises or initial responses within apps.

It's crucial to understand that all these AI advancements are developing under strict ethical oversight to ensure patient safety and privacy. While AI can certainly assist clinicians and improve efficiency, it will always remain a sophisticated tool, not a replacement, for the professional judgment, empathy, and nuanced human connection that defines a live conversation with an AHPRA-registered doctor.

#### **Deeper Integration with My Health Record**

Telehealth will continue to connect more deeply and seamlessly with **My Health Record**, Australia’s national digital health record system. This enhanced interoperability ensures smoother communication and more comprehensive sharing of your medical information between GPs, specialists, hospitals, and other healthcare providers involved in your care. This translates directly to better-coordinated care, reduced duplication of tests, and a more holistic understanding of your health journey across the entire health system.

#### **Bridging the Digital Divide: Ensuring Equitable Access**

Recognising that not all Australians have equal access to technology or digital literacy, ongoing efforts are focused on bridging the digital divide. This includes initiatives to make telehealth more accessible for everyone, regardless of their internet access in remote areas, any language barriers they may face, or their comfort level with digital tools. The goal is to ensure telehealth truly serves all Australians equitably.

### **The Bottom Line**

Telehealth doctors have undeniably changed healthcare in Australia for good. It’s no longer a temporary measure but a fundamental, highly effective, and widely accepted way to access medical care. From routine check-ups and managing chronic illnesses to accessing crucial mental health support, virtual care offers unparalleled convenience, impressive flexibility, and enhanced safety.

At Medicly, we’re deeply committed to making telehealth simple, secure, and tailored to your individual needs. Whether you’re seeking a GP for a common ailment, a mental health professional for ongoing support, or a specialist opinion for a complex condition, we’re here to help you skip the waiting room and get quality care — wherever you are.

Ready to experience healthcare on your terms? Book a telehealth appointment with Medicly today and see just how easy and empowering connected healthcare can be.

**Disclaimer:** This guide provides general information only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider for personal medical concerns.