# **A Complete Guide to Telehealth Appointments in Australia**

Telehealth has quickly evolved from a convenient extra to a central part of modern healthcare in Australia. Whether you live in a remote community, have limited mobility, or simply prefer the comfort of home, telehealth makes it easier than ever to connect with qualified healthcare professionals. This guide explains how telehealth works, who it suits, what it costs, and how to make the most of your appointment.

## **What is Telehealth?**

**Telehealth** means delivering healthcare remotely using technology like video calls, phone calls, or secure messaging.

Doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and specialists can assess, diagnose, treat, and monitor patients without seeing them in person. This model includes:

* **Real-time consultations:** Video or phone appointments where you speak to a clinician directly.
* **Store-and-forward:** Sharing medical information (like images or reports) to be reviewed later.
* **Remote patient monitoring:** Devices tracking health indicators (e.g., blood pressure or glucose) from home.

Originally used mostly in rural and remote areas, telehealth is now widely available across Australia, with Medicare subsidies and private insurance coverage making it more accessible.

## **How Telehealth Became a Pillar of Australian Healthcare**

The COVID-19 pandemic fast-tracked telehealth adoption. In just weeks, Medicare introduced hundreds of new telehealth items, enabling GPs and specialists to maintain care safely during lockdowns.

Since 2022, most telehealth items have become a **permanent part of Medicare**, representing the most significant structural reform since Medicare began.

Key benefits have included:

* Protecting patients and clinicians from infectious illness.
* Reducing travel burdens for people in regional and rural areas.
* Improving continuity of care for those managing chronic health conditions.

Today, telehealth is not only a safety measure—it’s a mainstream, reliable option for many everyday health needs.

## **Benefits for Patients and Providers**

**For patients**, telehealth offers:

* **Convenience:** No travel or parking hassles.
* **Faster care:** Same-day appointments are often available.
* **Comfort:** Consult from home or any private space.
* **Reduced exposure:** No waiting-room germs.
* **Lower costs:** Less time off work and reduced expenses.

**For healthcare providers**, benefits include:

* Greater reach to patients who might otherwise go without care.
* Fewer no-shows and better scheduling flexibility.
* Opportunities for collaboration with other clinicians.
* The ability to manage chronic conditions more proactively.

Practice managers also find telehealth improves workflows and supports growth without requiring more physical clinic space.

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

Telehealth works best when a physical examination isn’t essential. It’s especially useful for:

* Reviewing test results and care plans.
* Mental health assessments and counselling.
* Repeat prescriptions for stable conditions.
* Chronic disease management check-ins.
* Health education and advice.

However, **in-person appointments remain vital** for:

* New or serious symptoms needing examination (e.g., chest pain, severe shortness of breath).
* Procedures such as injections or wound care.
* Situations where clear communication is difficult (e.g., severe hearing impairment).
* Complex diagnoses that require hands-on assessment.

If your doctor feels telehealth isn’t appropriate, they’ll recommend an in-person visit.

## **Telehealth and Medicare**

Medicare subsidises a wide range of telehealth services, including:

* GP consultations.
* Specialist appointments.
* Mental health treatment.
* Chronic disease planning.
* Allied health services (psychology, physiotherapy, dietetics).

Medicare generally requires you to have an **established clinical relationship**—a face-to-face visit with the same GP or clinic in the past 12 months—to access bulk-billed GP telehealth services.

**Exceptions exist**, such as:

* Patients under 12 months old.
* Mental health and sexual health services.
* Emergency circumstances (e.g., pandemic restrictions).

Many GPs and specialists offer bulk billing, particularly for concession card holders and children. Always check with your clinic when booking.

## **Private Health Insurance and Telehealth**

Private health funds increasingly cover telehealth consultations, especially for allied health and chronic condition support. For example:

* **Bupa** provides telephone-based coaching for chronic disease and recovery support.
* **Medibank** funds selected telehealth services (psychology, physiotherapy, dietetics) under eligible extras cover.

Coverage varies by insurer, policy, and provider, so confirm eligibility before your appointment.

## **Privacy and Security**

Telehealth services in Australia must comply with the **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)** and state privacy laws. This means your health information must be:

* Collected lawfully and with consent.
* Stored securely with strict access controls.
* Transmitted using encrypted systems.

All practitioners are expected to:

* Verify your identity before starting the consultation.
* Clearly explain who they are and their role.
* Gain your consent if recording the appointment.
* Keep detailed records, just as they would in person.

Be wary of services that only rely on online questionnaires without any real-time interaction—this is not considered safe or good medical practice.

## **Your Rights and Responsibilities**

When you have a telehealth consultation, you have the same rights as any other patient. This includes:

✅ Being treated with respect.  
 ✅ Clear communication about your care.  
 ✅ Informed consent before treatment.  
 ✅ Privacy and confidentiality of your health information.  
 ✅ The right to involve support people.  
 ✅ The ability to provide feedback or complaints.

You’re also responsible for:

* Sharing accurate health information.
* Asking questions if you don’t understand something.
* Attending scheduled appointments or giving notice if you can’t.
* Treating healthcare workers with courtesy.

## **Preparing for a Telehealth Appointment**

Here’s how to get ready:

**Check your tech:**

* A smartphone, tablet, or computer with a camera and microphone.
* A stable internet connection (minimum ~384 kbps upload/download for video).
* Access to your email or SMS for links and e-script tokens.

**Set up your space:**

* Choose a quiet, private room with good lighting.
* Avoid sitting in front of windows (backlighting can obscure your face).
* Ensure no one else can overhear sensitive information.

**At the start of the appointment:**

* Confirm your identity and your clinician’s.
* Review your consent to record, if applicable.
* Make sure you understand how to get prescriptions, referrals, and test orders after your consultation.

If technical issues arise, most providers can reschedule or continue by phone.

## **Electronic Prescriptions and Digital Referrals**

Electronic prescriptions (e-scripts) are now widely used. Your doctor can send a **secure token by SMS or email**, which you take to any pharmacy or add to your **Active Script List (ASL)**. This:

* Reduces the risk of lost prescriptions.
* Makes repeat prescriptions easy to access.
* Supports safer, faster dispensing.

Digital referrals and encrypted messaging help your care team coordinate efficiently while protecting your privacy.

## **Choosing a Reputable Telehealth Provider**

When selecting a telehealth service, look for:

✅ **Registered Australian clinicians**—check AHPRA to confirm.  
 ✅ **Clear privacy policies** outlining how your data is protected.  
 ✅ **End-to-end encryption** and secure data storage.  
 ✅ Transparent fees and billing practices.

**Red flags to avoid:**

* Services promising prescriptions without any real-time consultation.
* Unclear information about who will be treating you.
* Multiple overlapping appointments or inconsistent billing.
* No clear way to provide feedback or complaints.

Medicly’s Australian-registered GPs and secure technology give you confidence that you’re receiving professional care with the same standards as an in-person clinic.

## **The Future of Telehealth**

Telehealth is set to grow even further. Trends on the horizon include:

* **Artificial intelligence** helping triage patients and draft clinical notes.
* **Remote monitoring** via wearables for chronic conditions.
* **5G networks** improving video quality and reliability.
* **Virtual reality tools** supporting rehabilitation and mental health care.

As policies evolve, telehealth will continue to balance access, safety, and continuity of care.

## **Final Thoughts**

Telehealth has transformed how Australians access healthcare. From routine check-ups to mental health support and chronic disease management, it offers a flexible, safe, and efficient alternative to traditional care—without compromising quality.

Medicly is here to make the process seamless, from booking to prescriptions to follow-up care.

**Ready to experience the Medicly difference?** Book a same-day video or phone appointment with an Australian GP today—no waiting rooms, no fuss.

**Disclaimer:** This article provides general information only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult your healthcare provider about your specific circumstances.