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## **The Complete Guide to Your Telehealth Appointment in Australia: Everything You Need to Know**

Let’s be honest: nobody wakes up excited to sit in a waiting room, patiently flicking through old magazines while listening to a symphony of coughs. That's precisely why **telehealth appointments have completely changed the game** for how Australians access medical care.

Picture yourself, whether you’re dealing with a persistent cough, chasing a repeat prescription, or simply wanting to chat with a doctor about a health concern – all without needing to leave your couch. Telehealth makes this possible, bringing unparalleled convenience right to your fingertips. Say goodbye to frustrating traffic, germ-laden waiting rooms, and the frantic juggling act of childcare just to squeeze in a five-minute consult with your GP.

But for those new to this digital frontier, a few questions naturally arise: How does telehealth actually work in practice? What should you truly expect during a virtual appointment? And, crucially, how can you ensure your online consultation runs as smoothly as possible, maximizing its value?

This guide is designed to be your complete, no-nonsense roadmap to confidently navigating telehealth in Australia, empowering you to embrace this modern approach to your health.

### **Why Telehealth Has Taken Off in Australia**

Australia is, famously, a vast continent. For countless individuals, particularly those living in rural or regional areas, "seeing a doctor" traditionally meant dedicating a significant chunk of their day – sometimes a half-day trip into town, or even longer for those in truly remote locations.

Telehealth hasn't just bridged these geographical gaps; it’s delivered a raft of other powerful benefits that have propelled it into the mainstream of Australian healthcare.

#### **Convenience Like Never Before**

Imagine the sheer simplicity of ducking into a GP appointment on your lunch break without even needing to step outside your office building. Or, picture having a detailed conversation with a specialist while comfortably seated in your own kitchen. Telehealth makes these scenarios a tangible reality, reshaping how we interact with healthcare providers.

For many Aussies, this unparalleled convenience often spells the difference between getting prompt medical help and simply putting it off because the traditional process feels too cumbersome or overwhelming. It removes those everyday friction points that often deter people from seeking timely care.

#### **Better Access, Wherever You Live**

Perhaps telehealth’s most profound impact has been as a lifeline for people residing in rural and regional communities. The days of enduring hours on the highway for a quick ten-minute consult are, for many, a rapidly fading memory. Instead, telehealth ensures you get access to quality healthcare exactly where you are, making specialized care accessible in ways previously unimaginable.

Beyond geography, its accessibility extends to:

* People with **mobility issues.**
* Parents **juggling kids.**
* People working **shift hours or odd rosters.**
* Those who simply **prefer privacy.**
* Individuals with **disability or language needs**, as it can facilitate easier integration of carers or interpreters.

#### **Safer Care**

The COVID-19 pandemic undeniably accelerated telehealth's adoption. It served as a critical tool for keeping both patients and healthcare professionals safe when face-to-face appointments posed inherent risks. Even now, with the pandemic largely behind us, telehealth remains an exceptionally handy option, particularly during peak flu seasons or for anyone who is immunocompromised and needs to minimize exposure to common illnesses. It's a proactive measure for public health.

#### **Supporting Mental Health**

For the realm of mental health, telehealth has been nothing short of a game-changer. The virtual format often removes several significant barriers to care:

* **Comfort and Openness:** Some individuals find it considerably easier to open up and discuss sensitive mental health concerns from the familiar, secure, and private environment of their own home.
* **Discretion:** The discreet nature of virtual consults means no awkward moments in public waiting rooms, which can be a relief for those concerned about privacy or perceived stigma.
* **Expanded Choice:** You're no longer limited to the pool of local providers in your immediate vicinity. Telehealth allows you to connect with a broader range of psychologists or psychiatrists located anywhere across the country, increasing your chances of finding the right fit for your needs.

#### **Potential Cost Savings**

While it's important to remember that telehealth isn't always free (just like in-person visits), it often delivers financial savings in less obvious ways. Consider the money saved on petrol, the elimination of parking fees, and potentially fewer hours taken off work. Moreover, the good news is that Medicare now covers a broad range of telehealth services, making quality online healthcare even more accessible and affordable for many Australians.

### **How to Book Your Telehealth Appointment**

Booking a telehealth appointment in Australia isn’t overly complicated, but the landscape of your options has certainly expanded, offering greater flexibility. Let’s walk through how to get started.

#### **Start With Your Regular Doctor**

If you already have a usual GP or specialist, beginning your telehealth journey with them is often the simplest and most recommended approach. These days, a significant number of general practices and specialist clinics have integrated telehealth into their service offerings for their existing patients. It's usually the easiest route because your doctor already possesses your comprehensive medical history and understands your ongoing health needs, ensuring strong continuity of care.

To find out if your regular clinic offers telehealth, you can:

* **Check their website.**
* **Simply give them a ring** and ask: Do they offer telehealth? Is it phone or video? What’s the cost – and is it bulk billed?

#### **Dedicated Telehealth Platforms**

Perhaps you don't have a regular GP, or you find yourself needing an appointment quickly – possibly even outside standard clinic hours. This is precisely where dedicated online telehealth services shine. These platforms specialise in connecting you with available Australian-registered doctors efficiently.

Trusted Australian providers include:

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

These services are specifically designed to offer:

* Short wait times, often providing same-day appointments.
* GPs or specialists available via video or phone.
* Online doctor consults for common issues.
* Prescriptions and e-scripts.
* Medical certificates.
* Specialist referrals.

You can book directly on their websites or through dedicated apps, often in just a few clicks.

#### **Healthdirect — The Government’s Tool**

Another incredibly handy and reliable option is the Healthdirect website. This invaluable resource, managed by the Australian Government, is designed to help you:

* Find nearby clinics or services anywhere in Australia.
* Filter specifically for telehealth providers.
* Locate specialised services like urgent after-hours GP care or dedicated mental health support services.

#### **What You’ll Need When Booking**

Regardless of the platform or clinic you choose, most telehealth booking processes will typically ask you for:

* Your name, DOB, and contact details.
* Your Medicare card details (if you plan to claim a rebate).
* A concise reason for your appointment – just a few words to give the doctor an initial understanding.
* Your preferred appointment times.

It’s always a smart move to **confirm the fees and Medicare rebate eligibility upfront** during the booking process. This simple step can prevent any unwelcome surprises when the invoice eventually comes through.

### **How to Prepare for Your Telehealth Appointment**

Here's where investing a little bit of prep work truly pays off. Think of it like getting ready for a traditional face-to-face doctor’s visit – but with significantly fewer old magazines and definitely no fish tank bubbling sadly in the corner. Proper preparation can make all the difference to a smooth and effective virtual consult.

#### **Test Your Tech**

Telehealth's simplicity relies on your technology cooperating. Before your appointment, it’s wise to perform a quick tech check:

* **Use a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or computer with a camera and microphone.**
* **Check your internet speed.** Video calls need a stable connection.
* **Test your camera, mic, and speakers** before the call.
* **Close other apps or browser tabs** to avoid freezing screens.
* If others at home are streaming movies or gaming, consider asking them nicely to pause while you’re on your call to free up bandwidth.

Many clinics will send you a test link so you can check everything works.

#### **Find a Quiet, Private Spot**

For telehealth to be truly effective, you need to be able to speak freely and openly without interruption or concern for privacy.

* **Choose a quiet, private room** where you won't be disturbed and where others cannot easily overhear your conversation.
* **Sit somewhere well-lit.** Natural light’s great – just avoid sitting with a bright window directly behind you.
* **Make sure your camera’s at eye level** if it’s a video call.
* If you’d like a support person with you, let your clinic know in advance. Ensure they are also visible on screen if it's a video call.

#### **Have Your Details Ready**

Just as you would for an in-person visit, having key information readily accessible can streamline your telehealth appointment considerably:

* Your Medicare card.
* Any private health insurance info.
* A list of your current medications and dosages.
* Any allergies.
* Notes on your symptoms: When did they start? Are they getting better or worse? What makes them better or worse?
* Jot down questions you’d like to ask. It’s easy to forget once you’re mid-consult.
* 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.

### **What Happens During Your Telehealth Appointment**

So, what’s it actually like to “see” your doctor online? Pretty similar to an in-person consult – minus the paper gowns and cold stethoscopes. Here’s what to expect.

#### **Starting the Call**

At your scheduled time, you might receive a phone call directly from the doctor, or a video link via email or text. Click the link, and you’re in.

#### **Identity Check**

Your doctor will briefly **introduce themselves and confirm their credentials**, then ask for your name and date of birth. This simple step ensures your information remains secure and they're speaking with the correct patient.

#### **Talking Through Your Concerns**

This is the heart of your appointment. Your doctor will ask about your symptoms, check on your medical history, and discuss relevant lifestyle factors. If it’s a video call, they might visually examine rashes or swelling, or guide you to demonstrate a joint movement or press on a sore spot. Don’t worry if it feels a bit strange at first; most doctors are skilled at helping patients navigate virtual exams.

#### **Discussing Next Steps**

After assessing you, your doctor will talk you through:

* Possible diagnoses.
* Treatment options.
* Whether further tests or referrals are needed.

They might:

* Write you an **e-script** for medication.
* Arrange **blood tests or imaging**.
* Issue a **medical certificate**.
* Set up a **follow-up appointment**.

And remember — ask questions. If you’re unsure about anything, now’s the time to clarify.

### **What Telehealth Doctors Can Do For You**

It’s a common question: What exactly can a telehealth doctor handle? Quite a lot, actually, covering a broad spectrum of common medical needs.

#### **Prescriptions**

Need medication? Doctors can:

* Issue **electronic prescriptions (e-scripts)** sent by SMS or email.
* Send traditional paper scripts to your pharmacy if needed.

Note that controlled medications might still require an in-person visit for safety reasons.

#### **Referrals**

Doctors can issue electronic or paper referrals for:

* Blood tests.
* Scans (ultrasounds, MRIs, X-rays).
* Specialist consultations.

Many services now integrate directly with pathology or imaging providers for seamless referrals.

#### **Medical Certificates**

Telehealth doctors can provide medical certificates for:

* Work or school absences.
* Fitness-to-work assessments.

These can often be emailed to you as a PDF.

#### **Chronic Disease Management**

If you live with conditions like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease, telehealth doctors can:

* Adjust management plans.
* Provide medication reviews.
* Offer lifestyle and self-care guidance.

It helps keep you on track without constant trips to the clinic.

#### **Mental Health Care**

Telehealth is a powerful tool for mental health support. Doctors can:

* Discuss mental health symptoms.
* Create mental health treatment plans.
* Refer you to psychologists, psychiatrists, or counsellors.
* Provide counselling sessions themselves.

### **After Your Telehealth Appointment**

Your appointment ends, but your healthcare journey continues.

#### **Prescriptions**

If you’ve received an e-script, you’ll get a digital token via SMS or email. Show it to the pharmacy to collect your medication. Lost your token? Don’t panic – your doctor or pharmacist can resend it.

#### **Referrals**

If you’ve been referred for tests or specialists, book appointments promptly and keep electronic or paper copies of referrals handy.

#### **Follow-Up Care**

Your doctor may recommend another telehealth appointment, or suggest an in-person follow-up for a physical exam. They might also ask you to monitor symptoms or take home readings (like blood pressure). Everything discussed goes into your medical file so there’s continuity of care for future appointments – virtual or face-to-face.

### **How Much Does Telehealth Cost in Australia?**

Telehealth costs vary depending on who you see, the type of service, and how long your consult lasts.

#### **Private Fees**

A standard GP telehealth consult generally ranges from **$45 to $75.** Specialists may charge more.

#### **Bulk Billing**

Some GPs bulk bill telehealth consults, particularly for concession card holders, children under 12 months, or specific mental health services. Bulk billing means Medicare covers the entire cost – leaving you with no out-of-pocket fees.

#### **Medicare Rebates**

Telehealth is permanently part of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). However, Medicare generally requires an existing clinical relationship, meaning you’ve seen that doctor in person in the past 12 months.

Exceptions apply for:

* Babies under 12 months.
* People experiencing homelessness.
* Urgent after-hours care.
* Patients registered with a MyMedicare practice (for specific long phone consultations).
* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients (for certain services).

Always check your eligibility for rebates when booking.

### **Keeping Your Telehealth Appointment Private and Secure**

Privacy matters. Australian law ensures telehealth services must protect your information, including:

* The **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)**.
* The **Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)**.

Trusted telehealth providers use encrypted platforms, verify your identity at each consult, keep records securely stored, and obtain consent before recording calls.

Your Role in Privacy:

* Avoid public Wi-Fi for telehealth appointments.
* Only click on links from known, trusted providers.
* Review privacy policies on any telehealth service you use.
* If you get an email or message claiming to be your telehealth provider and something feels off, call your clinic directly to check.

### **The Future of Telehealth in Australia**

Telehealth isn’t just a pandemic invention. It’s the new normal – and it’s evolving fast.

#### **Hybrid Care Models**

Many practices are embracing hybrid care, strategically mixing telehealth and face-to-face appointments for truly tailored patient care. This blend offers the best of both worlds, optimising convenience and clinical effectiveness.

#### **Remote Patient Monitoring**

Wearables and home medical devices are taking telehealth further. Imagine your smartwatch sending your heart rate to your doctor, or home blood pressure readings being shared instantly. This means more proactive care, fewer hospital visits, and better long-term health outcomes, giving you and your doctor a continuous picture of your health.

#### **Artificial Intelligence**

AI is being used to help triage symptoms, generate clinical notes for doctors, and support mental health apps. While AI can certainly assist, it will always remain a sophisticated tool, not a replacement, for the professional judgment and empathetic connection that defines a live conversation with an AHPRA-registered clinician.

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

Telehealth will keep tying in more tightly with My Health Record, making it even easier for GPs, specialists, and hospitals to securely and seamlessly share your medical information. This translates to better-coordinated care and a more holistic understanding of your health journey.

### **The Bottom Line**

Telehealth has well and truly cemented itself in the way Australians look after their health. It’s flexible, effective, and – let’s face it – often a relief when life’s already busy enough.

By knowing how to prepare, what to expect, and how to choose reputable services, you’re ready to make telehealth work for you.

At Medicly, we’re here to help you take the hassle out of healthcare. Whenever you’re ready, booking a telehealth appointment is just a few clicks away.