

## Patient Information (info) for a Virtual Care Appointment



### What is a virtual care appointment?

A virtual care appointment is a meeting with a member of your health care team. The appointment will be done using a computer, telephone, or smartphone. You can have this appointment in the comfort of your own home (or location of your choosing).



### What equipment will I need?

You will need:

- A computer, laptop or other mobile device that can connect to the internet.
- A stable internet connection with access to Google Chrome or Safari browser.
- A microphone and speakers.
- A webcam. Please note that your device may have a built-in webcam.
- A private space, where others cannot hear you.
- An email address.



### Why do you need my email address?

- To schedule you for a virtual appointment, we require your email address.
- To comply with privacy guidelines, it is essential that we receive your consent before collecting/using your email address.
- Grand River Hospital/St. Mary's General Hospital will only email you with your permission.
- Grand River Hospital/St. Mary's General Hospital will only email you about your health care, including appointment instructions, confirmations, or patient experience feedback.
- The emails we send you may contain personal health information.
- Grand River Hospital/St. Mary's General Hospital will email you when the appointment is scheduled and 48-hours before the appointment with a link to join the virtual care appointment. You will also receive additional information about privacy considerations related to virtual appointment technology in the patient education materials.

- You should never email Grand River Hospital/St. Mary's General Hospital in urgent or emergency situations.
- Email is never completely secure. The use of email always has some privacy and security risks.
- You may decide to stop using email to communicate with us at any time by contacting the clinic.

If you do not consent to providing your email address, the health care team will help you decide the best appointment type.



### **Is a virtual care appointment right for me?**

- Your health care team will help you decide if a virtual care appointment is right for you at this time.
- They will discuss your care needs.
- They will also talk to you about the technology that you have.
- Some appointments can be virtual, and other times appointments must be done in person. For example, if the health care team wants to just talk with you then this can be done virtually.
- However, some health problems are not right for virtual appointments, and may need to be done in person. An example of this would be if you require a physical exam.
- Virtual care cannot replace the need for a physical examination. Urgent care should be sought in-person, or at an Emergency Department as necessary.



### **What are the risks of a virtual appointment?**

We work hard to ensure your virtual care appointment and personal health information is kept private and confidential. However, no digital communication is completely secure, and there are risks:

- Third parties may intercept and access electronic communications.
- Your information may be stored or accessed outside of Canada. For example, some email services like Gmail or Hotmail may store emails on servers outside of Canada.
- Organizations may have to share information where required by law or under court order.
- If other people use your device or email account, they could view, change, or delete your information.
- If your device has a virus or malware, your information may not be secure
- Emails can be sent to the wrong email address. We will make efforts to confirm the correct email address is on file for you.



## **How do I get ready for the virtual care appointment?**

- You will need your health card.
- Have your glasses and hearing aids ready for the appointment.
- Some clinics will ask you to have certain information (info) ready for the appointment.
- Have a list of all the medications that you are currently taking.
- Please be in a private space.
- It's a good idea to have pen and paper ready. You might want to write down any questions that you have before the appointment, so you don't forget to ask them.
- Please be ready 15 minutes before the appointment. You will need to be able to stay 30 minutes after the meeting time in case the health care team is running late.
- Please be prepared to share your telephone number should technical issues arise.
- Please be prepared to share your geographical location.



## **Who can and will be present during the appointment?**

- You can have a family member, friend, or support person with you. You can also send the meeting link to them if it is easier for them to attend.
- All the health care team members on the call will introduce themselves.
- You and anyone you have asked to be on the call with you will be asked to introduce yourself



## **Can I decline a virtual care appointment?**

- We will ask for your consent to participate in a virtual care appointment.
- You can decline a virtual care appointment at any time by contacting the clinic via phone. The clinic or healthcare provider will let you know about alternative options to give you safe and effective care.
- Please note that this change in appointment type may mean that you must wait longer for an in-person appointment.



## **What about my privacy?**

Your privacy is important to us. Below are some ways we protect your privacy during a virtual care appointment.

- Secure software will be used for the appointment.
- We only send your personal information to the email address you provide.
- The health care team member will be in a private location when on the virtual care appointment.
- Just like an in-person appointment, we strive to keep your personal information (info) private. We do this by making sure that your appointment is done in a private space.
- Please note that just like email or online shopping there are risks that your information (info) could be intercepted. We want you to be aware of those risks.
- To prevent others from accessing the information on your device, we recommend using virus protection on your device, protecting your passwords, and using secure internet. Public Wi-Fi connections (like in coffee shops and libraries) are less secure.
- You should use your own personal device for the virtual care appointment. If you use an employer's or someone else's device, they may be able to access your information (info).

Should have a privacy-related concern/complaint, please notify your respective Privacy Office immediately:

For GRH Privacy Office:

Phone: 519-749-4275

Email: [Confidentially.Speaking@grhosp.on.ca](mailto:Confidentially.Speaking@grhosp.on.ca)

For SMGH Privacy Office:

Phone: 519-744-3311 ext. 1209

Email: [privacyoffice@smgh.ca](mailto:privacyoffice@smgh.ca)

- If you have concerns about any information (info) and/or links being emailed to you, you can contact the clinic via telephone to confirm that this information (info) has in fact come from the clinic.



## Questions?

- Please contact the clinic via phone if you have any questions before your virtual care appointment.



**If you are having an emergency health problem:**

- Please call 911 or go directly to the emergency department if you are having an emergency health problem.
- Please note that a virtual care appointment is not a substitute for emergency medical care.