



TELE-REHABILITATION AND PHYSIOTHERAPY PATIENT INFORMATION

April 7, 2020

WHAT IS TELE-REHABILITATION?

Tele-rehabilitation is rehabilitation services including physiotherapy provided at a distance, either by telephone or online technologies like video conferencing.¹ Some other names used for tele-rehabilitation include tele-practice and virtual care.

Many people can access care virtually but it might not work for everyone depending on their condition and other things like access to technology or comfort in taking instructions by phone or online. It is up to you and your physiotherapist to decide if virtual care works for you and your condition.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF PHYSIOTHERAPY IS DELIVERED VIRTUALLY?

Whether you receive physiotherapy in-person on the phone or online you should expect to receive high quality of care. The physiotherapist will work with you, and anyone you wish to have help with your care, to adjust how your assessment and treatments are delivered virtually.

Some hands-on treatment techniques cannot be provided in a virtual setting but there are many things that a physiotherapist can do to help you. These include teaching you techniques you can do, or your helper can do with you, and specific exercises individualized for your needs.

You can expect to receive safe, effective, customized and evidence-based care as you would with an in-clinic office visit. Whether care is provided virtually or in the clinic setting, physiotherapists must comply with all the standards of practice of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.²

¹ <https://www.collegept.org/registrants/virtual-practice-in-physiotherapy>. Accessed on April 9, 2020.

² <https://www.collegept.org/>. Accessed on April 9, 2020.

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM GOING TO SEE MY PHYSIOTHERAPIST IN THE CLINIC?

Virtual physiotherapy visits provide an option for assessments and treatments when it is the choice of the patient to access care that way or when you can't access in-person services for reasons like during a pandemic where physical distancing measures are in place.

Services that a physiotherapist can provide virtually include:

- Assessing your condition as you start care or to monitor how you are doing.
- Prescribing you an individualized exercise program including teaching and watching you do them so they can make sure you are doing them correctly.
- Progressing your exercise program so you keep improving over time.
- Use of modalities like electrical stimulation and heat/cold applications as long as you and your physiotherapist have determined the appropriate equipment that is available at your home.
- Guiding you to perform techniques on yourself including how to do the technique and at what intensity.
- Support for self-management, education, coaching and reassurance for you and those helping you so that you understand your condition and your treatment plan.
- Assessing how you are doing all your daily activities in your home and helping with recommendations on any adaptations you may need.

There are some things that can't be done virtually including some hands-on assessment or treatment techniques. You and your physiotherapist will work together to modify your treatment based on what you have at home and the supports you have available.

ARE THERE RISKS TO RECEIVING TELE-REHABILITATION CARE?

For all care, whether virtual or in-person, your physiotherapist will go over the care plan and make sure you are informed of any risks and consent to care.

Specific to virtual care, the two main concerns are making sure your personal health information is protected and that you are in a safe place to receive care.³

Physiotherapists are required to ensure the privacy and security of your personal information at all times. This extends to the technology they use as well as the appropriateness of the setting in which you receive your care.

³ <https://www.alliancept.org/publications/>. Accessed on April 9, 2020.



The physiotherapist must also check that the location you pick to receive care is safe (e.g. no tripping risks) and that procedures are in place for you to receive help in the event of an emergency. The physiotherapist may recommend that your visit is done in the presence of another person to enhance the safety and value of the visit.⁴

WHICH PHYSIOTHERAPY CLINICS ARE OFFERING TELE-REHABILITATION OR VIRTUAL SERVICES AT THIS TIME DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

Clinic based physiotherapy services (i.e. private practices) have been directed by the government of Ontario not to provide in-person assessments or treatments at this time unless it is deemed to be urgent.

Your physiotherapist will assess whether your need for an in-person visit is urgent based on your individual condition and the definitions of urgent set out by the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario. At all times we are guided by what is best for you and the need to minimize risk of infection. That is why more and more physiotherapists have added virtual care options for you to access.

Physiotherapists have been asked to make sure that their website, social media channels, and voicemails are updated to let people know what services are available (including tele-rehabilitation) and how to book appointments during office closures. You can still search for physiotherapists in your area using the [Find-a-Physiotherapist](#) tool and contact the clinics directly.

DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR TELE-REHABILITATION SERVICES?

Tele-rehabilitation services are being covered by a number of insurance benefit plans. If you are not sure if your insurance provider will cover tele-rehabilitation, then you should contact them in advance of booking an appointment. In addition, in Ontario the Workers Safety and Insurance Bureau (WSIB) covers virtual visits with your physiotherapist.

⁴ <https://www.alliancept.org/publications/>. Accessed on April 9, 2020.