



1. Telehealth

1.1 Policy

Telehealth refers to the use of information and communication technologies to deliver health services to patients of our practice, when face-to-face consultation is not possible or not appropriate due to geographical reasons, infection control management or other factors.

Our practice **Warner Lakes Family Practice** has appointed members of the practice team as telehealth coordinators to monitor and adapt procedures associated with telehealth consultations, and the Medicare Benefits Scheme, in addition to monitoring and implementing the advice of the QLD health department or federal government, as required.

It is also the responsibility of the telehealth coordinator to ensure all members of the practice team are educated and kept up to date on the telehealth policies of this practice, including making changes as they occur.

As our practice is in urban suburb, it is unlikely that we would need to facilitate telehealth services for patients living remotely; however, where this might be required and the patient's care does not meet the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) eligibility criteria, the patient will be privately billed.

During a declared public health emergency, to help reduce unnecessary risk of community transmission and to provide protection for patients and our practice team, our practice will offer telehealth services to all patients. Face-to-face consultations will still be undertaken where it is considered the most appropriate method, provided it is safe to do so.

1.2. Procedure



In our practice, we have nominated the receptionists and the GPs as telehealth coordinators.

A Telehealth appointment is just like a standard appointment with your GP, but it will be conducted over the phone. Your GP will go through the normal procedures of asking about your symptoms and assessing potential diagnoses. You can also get your scripts for medicine or discuss any general health concerns.

HOW TO BOOK A TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENT?

Call the practice during standard opening hours and our staff will book your appointment for you.

Patient must have had a face-to-face consult in the last 12 months with the specified GP

Benefits of telehealth

By choosing to attend your appointment via telehealth, you can;

- reduce/remove your need to travel.
- improve your access to timely care.

It is important to your doctor that you receive the best care possible. This means that telehealth might not always be the best option for you. Make sure you ask your GP if telehealth is right for you.

A telehealth consultation is only conducted in place of a face-to-face consult when it is clinically appropriate to do so. Examples of consultation types where telehealth is considered appropriate include:

- Covid-19 or Flu
- routine check-ups that do not require updates to measured information such as height and weight
- general pathology forms for ongoing management or general check-up (must be known patient)
- mental health treatment must be ongoing
- chronic disease management, general question, or issues
- health assessments as guided by the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)
- support counselling (e.g. pregnancy)
- Repeat prescriptions where the patient is a long-term patient and or has a significant reason not to attend face to face e.g. mobility issues or pandemic Covid -19 illnesses or any other infectious disease or is immunocompromised.

Examples of consultation types where telehealth is not appropriate include:

- minor excisions and procedures,
- wound management,
- electrocardiography,
- spirometry,
- insertion and removal contraceptive implants,



- immunisations and other routine injections,
- Pap smears,
- check-ups requiring measured information such as height and weight or blood pressure,
- prescriptions for scheduled medications to patients not known to the practice,
- **patients who have not seen GP in last 12 months or never had face to face with other GP's in the practice.**

When arranging a telehealth consultation, it must first be ascertained if the patient meets the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) eligibility criteria, either by geographical location, demographic (e.g. aged care residents or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples), or as instated by the NSW health or federal government during a public health emergency.

If the patient is eligible for a Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) claimable telehealth consultation, the consultation can be booked in through our reception team or via our online booking system.

If the patient is ineligible for a Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) claimable telehealth consultation, the patient must be informed of the fees associated with accessing a telehealth consultation before the appointment is booked.

When booking a telehealth consultation, patients are informed of the risks and benefits of technology-based consultations, including their rights and responsibilities, and must provide consent to continue.

When telehealth consultations are implemented as part of a pandemic response plan, the telehealth coordinator ensures all physical requirements are in place to offer extended telehealth services, such as having sufficient inward and outbound telephone lines, call diversion where clinical team members are working from home or off-site, remote access to the practice software systems enabled for off-site workers, and access to printers and facsimile machines for the clinical team members working off-site or from home.

At the commencement of a telehealth consultation, the patient's identity is verified and verbal consent is obtained from the patient to proceed; this consent is particularly important in situations where it is evident that the patient is not in a private location, or is not alone.

In situations where a third party is involved in the consultation, whether requested by the general practitioner or present with the patient, consent from the patient will be obtained with Third party observing or clinically involved in the consultation.

General practitioners and the practice nurse are responsible for documenting the care provided by them in addition to ensuring all other protocols are followed in relation to Clinical management.