

TIPS TO

IMPROVE your

“websiteside manner”

Telehealth is rapidly growing in popularity. And while virtual visits can make accessing care more convenient for patients, it's important to remember that they can significantly change the clinician-patient relationship. A positive patient experience in person isn't the same as one on screen. **Here are tips to help you keep the patient at the center of the visit—even from afar.**

BEFORE THE VISIT



Get your technology up and running

- › Ensure you have a strong Wi-Fi connection.
- › Close any extra tabs before your visit to improve video quality.
- › Have contact information for tech support on hand.
- › Set your webcam at eye level.

Set the stage for conversation

- › Choose a quiet, private place for the video visit.
- › Eliminate any distracting items in the background.
- › Avoid windows or bright lights behind you. Solid, neutral tones, like gray or tan, make the best video backgrounds.
- › Review any information about the patient's medical history, symptoms, or concerns before the visit.

Account for time

- › Notify the patient if you're running behind.
- › Consider leaving a buffer to account for technical difficulties or patient questions about the platform.



DURING THE VISIT

Address any *technology issues* that could distract from the visit



Keep your focus on the patient

- › Look directly into your webcam to make eye contact, rather than at the patient's image on the screen.
- › Minimize your own video image if it's distracting you.
- › Tell the patient if you need to turn away from the camera to take notes or review their chart.

Minimize audio distractions

- › Mute your computer when the patient is speaking or while you type notes to avoid background noise.
- › Wait about two seconds after the patient finishes speaking to respond. Connection issues can create a lag time, and your pause ensures you won't cut the patient off.
- › Avoid any distracting noises, like clicking your pen or tapping your foot.

DURING THE VISIT *cont.*

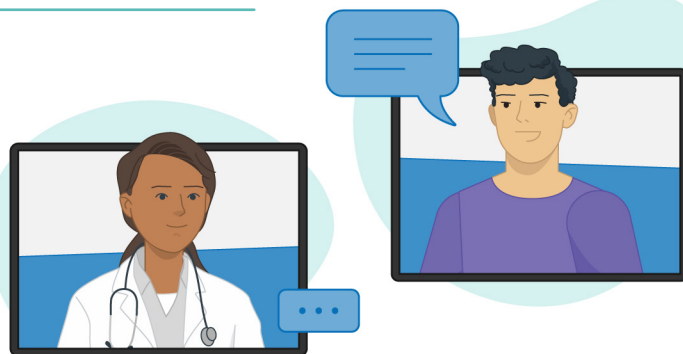
Practice *patient-centered* communication

Break the ice

- › Introduce yourself and your role, even if you've met the patient before.
- › Put the patient at ease with a wave and an open-ended question, like “How is your day going?”
- › Ask the patient to share their goals for the visit. Jot down key concerns or questions to ensure the visit meets their needs.

Give clear patient cues—and be on the lookout for cues the patient gives you

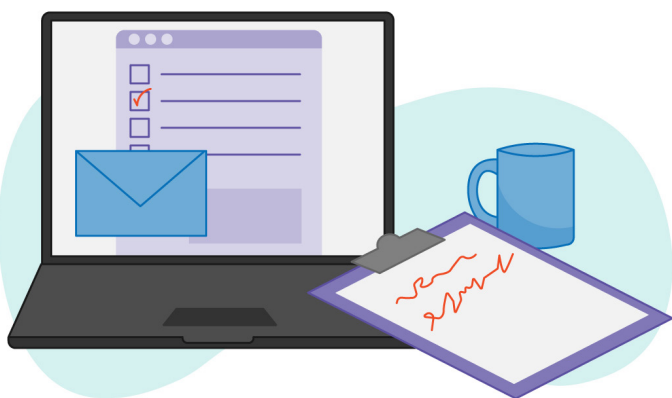
- › Use verbal prompts if you need a patient to adjust their posture, move to better lighting, or share a photo.
- › Give body language cues like nodding your head to show patients you hear them.
- › Keep an eye out for signs that the patient is not in an environment where they can share personal information, like whispering or brief responses.



Practice active listening and leave time for questions

- › Repeat back the patient's symptoms or concerns to confirm you're understanding them correctly.
- › Ask patients to repeat any instructions you've given them in their own words and clarify any misunderstandings in plain language.
- › Allocate enough time at the end of the visit to address questions.
- › Discuss next steps and surface any patient concerns about achieving them.

AFTER THE VISIT



Summarize the visit and next steps

- › Send patients a follow-up note recapping the takeaways from the visit.
- › Outline any next steps the patient needs to take, such as symptoms to monitor, prescriptions to pick up, necessary lab work, or scheduling a follow-up appointment.
- › Include contact information the patient can use to reach you with further questions.
- › Proactively ask for feedback on the patient's experience with the virtual visit, either in the moment or with a follow-up survey.

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