



Telehealth effectively connects individuals and their healthcare providers when in-person care is not necessary or not possible. Using telehealth services, patients can receive care, consult with a provider, get information about a condition or treatment, arrange for prescriptions, and receive a diagnosis. In the 30 plus years that telehealth has been in-use, it has been consistently shown to be a safe and quality care modality, a convenient option for both patients and the clinicians who care for them, and a secure environment for the collection and transmission of personal health information. In combination, these attributes extend where and how care is delivered for a stronger healthcare system.

Telehealth and virtual care can increase access to care for rural communities, underserved and vulnerable patient populations, and to individuals unable to secure in-person care, ensuring that everyone has access to safe, effective, and appropriate care when and where they need it. For example, telehealth can support access to high-quality, safe, and convenient care for older adults, allowing individuals to “age-in-place” and connect with a provider regularly. Telehealth also improves efficiencies, helps to reduce costs and enables healthcare providers and hospital systems to do more good for more people.

The most commonly used approaches in telehealth include:

Virtual Visits: Live, synchronous, interactive encounters between a patient and a healthcare provider via video, telephone, or live chat.

Chat-based Interactions: Asynchronous online or mobile app communications to transmit a patient’s personal health data, vital signs and other physiologic data or diagnostic images to a healthcare provider to review and deliver a consultation, diagnosis, or treatment plan at a later time.

Remote Patient Monitoring: The collection, transmission, evaluation, and communication of individual health data from a patient to their healthcare provider or extended care team from outside a hospital or clinical office (i.e., the patient’s home) using personal health technologies including wireless devices, wearable sensors, implanted health monitors, smartphones and mobile apps. Remote patient monitoring supports ongoing condition monitoring and chronic disease management and can be synchronous or asynchronous, depending upon the patient’s needs. The application of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, can enable better disease surveillance and early detection, allow for improved diagnosis, and support personalized medicine.

Technology-Enabled Modalities: Telehealth and virtual care solutions also provide for physician-to-physician consultation, patient education, data transmission, data interpretation, digital diagnostics (algorithm-enabled diagnostic support) and digital therapeutics (the use of personal health devices and sensors, either alone or in combination with conventional drug therapies, for disease prevention and management).