

Diabetes care and COVID-19

Diabetes health care may have changed over the last few months because of COVID-19. You may feel worried about accessing diabetes care and this is understandable. Your health remains a priority and there are many options available to ensure you are still getting support from your health care team.

Attending diabetes clinics or other health care facilities

Some aspects of your diabetes care can't be covered by phone or video. For example, HbA1c and other blood checks, eyecare and footcare require a visit to a clinic or pathology centre. These are essential for your long-term health.

It's natural to have concerns about going into health care facilities during the pandemic. Clinics and hospitals are taking precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Here are a few things to think about if you're having face-to-face visits:

» **Stay connected.** keep your usual medical or pathology appointments. Postponing appointments may be a way to cope with your worry about getting infected, but health problems, including diabetes, do not stop during COVID-19. Your health care team is available to support you during the pandemic.

» **Travelling to and from the clinic.** What is the safest and most practical way for you to get to the clinic? It may be useful to schedule your clinic visit at a quiet time of the day (such as late morning), especially if using public transport. This will make it easier for you to keep physically distant from others.

» **Be proactive and prepared.** Don't be afraid to ask your health care team questions ahead of time. For example: 'what changes has the clinic made to keep people safe?' or 'what new steps will I need to follow when I arrive for my appointment?'

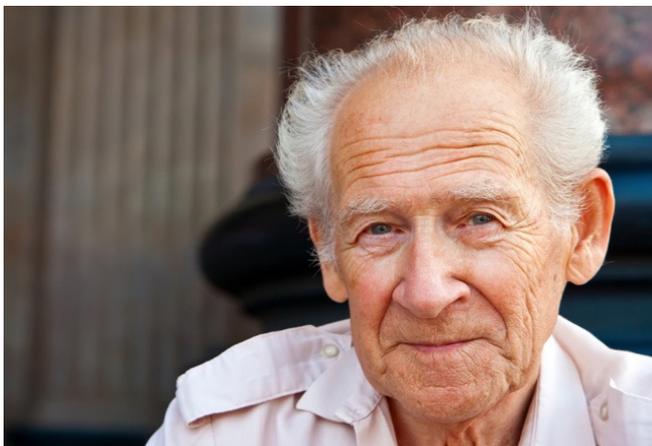
» **Focus on things within your control.** Continue to take steps to keep safe during COVID-19: keep physically distant (1.5 metres apart), cover coughs and sneezes; wash your hands well and frequently; minimise touching your face, especially when in public. The Department of Health provides up-to-date advice about the use of masks to protect you and others. Read more at [health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-use-of-masks-by-the-public-in-the-community](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-use-of-masks-by-the-public-in-the-community).

Accessing health care from home

What is telehealth? The use of technology to access health services when you and your health professional are not in the same place. This can be by phone or video call. Telehealth is suitable for managing many aspects of diabetes care. There should be no additional cost to you, other than the usual consultation fees.

You may prefer to see your health professionals face-to-face, but there are benefits to telehealth, which may suit you:

- » **Safety first.** Helps you maintain physical distance while still accessing vital health services.
- » **Saves time.** No travel or time spent in waiting rooms.
- » **Saves money.** No travel or parking costs.
- » **Convenience.** Reduces the need for care of children or older family.



“I don’t think the video consult with my endocrinologist will be quite the same, but I know I’ll see him again in person in the future, and I’m happy to do this.”

Garry, 81, type 2 diabetes

Get the most from your telehealth visit:

- » **Phone or video call.** Many visits are via phone. For video calls, your device (computer, tablet, smartphone) will need a camera and internet access.
- » **Privacy.** Set yourself up in a quiet space where you won’t be disturbed or overheard. Telehealth calls are not recorded but ask your health professional if you are concerned.
- » **Prepare.** Have your recent glucose levels and medication(s) in front of you. Prepare a list of questions, such as: ‘how will I receive my script?’ or ‘how can I have my blood pressure checked safely?’. Have a pen and paper ready to make notes or ask to have key information sent to you by SMS, email or post. Download your meter or pump data and send the report to your health professional so you can discuss the results during your telehealth consult.
- » **Prefer someone with you?** It may be helpful to have a support person with you (for example, to assist with the technology, write things down). Introduce them to your health professional at the start of the visit.
- » **Give it a go.** You won’t know what it is like until you try. Talk with your health care team before your appointment, let them know this is your first telehealth experience. They may be able to provide you with extra support or guidance.

Telehealth or face-to-face?

- » **It's your decision.** Seek information about your risk of COVID-19 from the Department of Health, so that you can make an informed decision about what is best for your health. You can still visit your clinic for many of your check-ups. Your health care team can provide you with up-to-date advice and support. Read more at [health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert](https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert).

More information

For more information or to speak to a diabetes health professional please call the NDSS Helpline on **1800 637 700**.

“I noticed some changes to my feet that I hadn't seen before. My doctor asked me to come into the clinic for a foot check. He reassured me they were taking lots of safety precautions to keep people safe.”

Alice, 29, type 1 diabetes



The NDSS and you

A wide range of services and support is available through the NDSS to help you manage your diabetes. This includes information on diabetes management through the NDSS Helpline and website. The products, services and education programs available can help you stay on top of your diabetes.

Developed in collaboration with The Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes, a partnership for better health between Diabetes Victoria and Deakin University.