



THE UNIVERSITY *of* NORTH TEXAS  
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER *at* FORT WORTH

## CENTER FOR GERIATRICS

COVID-19 Special Edition:  
*Weekly Updates & Resources | April 8, 2020*

Get the latest updates from HSC's Coronavirus (COVID-19) response at [unthsc.edu/coronavirus](https://unthsc.edu/coronavirus).

---

## TELEMEDICINE:

### *Receiving Healthcare While Social Distancing*

During this period of social distancing, many older adults and others find themselves wondering how they can continue to receive health services in a safe manner. Through the use of Telemedicine, patients can receive healthcare from the safety of their own home, without exposing themselves to the risks associated with an in-person visit. Here are some frequently asked questions to help you navigate the world of Telemedicine:

### WHAT IS TELEMEDICINE?

The remote delivery of health care services and clinical information using the internet or telephone technology. It is a two-way, real time conferencing between the doctor and patient.

---

### WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN TELEMEDICINE VISITS?

States have telehealth laws for appropriately licensed and supervised health care practitioners to provide telemedicine services. Patients must provide a verbal consent to participate in telemedicine visits with their health care provider.

---

### IS TELEMEDICINE SAFE?

Yes, since it is guided by technical standards and clinical practice guidelines and backed by years of research and demonstrations. It is a safe and cost-effective way to extend delivery of health care.

As with any health care service, there are risks associated with the use of telemedicine, including equipment failure, poor image resolution, and information security issues. Also, a provider cannot physically examine the patient through telemedicine.

Health care providers make sure patients are informed about the risks of telemedicine and that provider-patient interactions are secure and confidential through HIPAA compliant telecommunication methods.

---

## IS IT COVERED BY INSURANCE?

Yes, both Medicare and Medicaid and many private insurance plans cover telemedicine services.

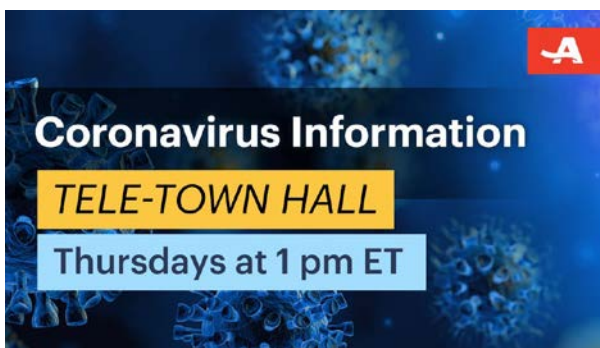
---

## WHAT ARE BENEFITS OF TELEMEDICINE?

Telemedicine helps family members and patients by: decreasing unnecessary hospital or doctor visits, decreasing the stress put on at home caregivers, and improves overall patient and family satisfaction. Patients living in rural areas are able to receive telemedicine services with remotely located health care providers.

For caregivers, it makes their job easier to meet the needs of their loved one. Caregivers have responsibilities of their own such as raising children to holding down a job. If they can consult with their older adult's doctor from their home, then they won't have to spend as much time getting the older adults to and from the physician's office. Caregivers can gain valuable insight and knowledge from a remote consultation thus improving the quality of care of their relative.

---



AARP is hosting weekly, live Coronavirus Information Tele-Town Hall events. Experts will be present each week for a live Q&A and will address your questions related to the week's topic. **You can participate by calling toll-free 1-855-274-9507, or listen to the live audio stream every Thursday at 1 pm ET.**

To listen live or for the latest coronavirus news and advice, visit [AARP.org/coronavirus](https://www.aarp.org/coronavirus).

---

# TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TELEMEDICINE VISIT

Whether you are a healthcare provider or patient, your first Telemedicine visit can be tricky or even intimidating. Below are some tips provided by the [HSC Clinical Practice Group](#) that can help you prepare for the visit and get the most out of your virtual experience.

## Choose An Appropriate Setting & Device:

- Laptop with camera or phone with camera
- Headphones to reduce the background noise during your visit
- Reliable internet connection
- Private, quiet area for duration of visit

## Install Video Conferencing Software on your Device:

- Download or install the recommended video conference software on your device before your appointment. If you do not know what software to use, contact your provider.
- Test your device to make sure settings are working properly.
- If prompted, give your computer/device permission to access your camera and audio.
- Make sure you can see yourself on the screen.
- Use the 'Test My Audio' feature to ensure your microphone is working properly.

## Video Tips:

- Use a self-view on your computer/device so you can see what you look like on screen. A clear image of yourself can help others read your non-verbal cues.
- **Maximize** front-facing lighting, and **minimize** the lighting behind you.
- Sit up-straight with most of your upper torso, shoulders, and head visible in the video.
- If using a phone, prop it up to make it steady and avoid unflattering camera angles.

## Audio Tips:

- Check to see if your microphone is muted when the visit begins. If prompted to speak, simply unmute your microphone so others can hear you.
- Speak clearly using an even volume and tone when speaking.
- Minimize distracting background noises, such as typing, paper shuffling, or music.
- Be careful not to say anything out loud that you do not want other to hear.

### Be Courteous:

- Consider using headphones during the visit so protected health information is not overheard by others.
- Try not to multitask during the visit so you can stay focused.
- Avoid distractions such as side conversations, using your phone, or checking emails.
- Make an effort to look at the camera often - not the screen - to give the impression that you are giving direct eye-contact.
- If you are not speaking, mute yourself to reduce background noises that may be unavoidable.

---

## CHEER OVER FEAR INITIATIVE

**CHEER**  
OVER  
**FEAR**

The purpose of this initiative is to provide our patients with some encouragement and cheer through letters, cards, drawings (from your kids), etc. We want to let our patients know that they are important to us and we are here to support them during this challenging time.

**How You Can Help**

**DO:** Tell them they are in our thoughts and we look forward to seeing them in the clinic again soon

**DON'T:** Mention any COVID-19 statistics that would incite fear

Contact our team members for more information  
Natasha.Gordon@unthsc.edu  
Leah.Johnston2@unthsc.edu  
Kristen.Reuter@unthsc.edu

The [HSC - Center for Geriatrics](#) Social Work Team has created an initiative to help support our patient's emotional well-being during this challenging time. Please join us in providing some encouragement through letters, cards, children's drawings, or any other way you can to spread **CHEER!** Our Social Workers will be mailing these items directly to patients that we believe could use a little extra **CHEER!**

Contact us for more information:

[Natasha.Gordon@unthsc.edu](mailto:Natasha.Gordon@unthsc.edu)

---

## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

*Here are some ways YOU can make a difference during the COVID-19 outbreak.*

### **Volunteer Opportunities:**

Visit [voly.org](http://voly.org) and click on the [Urgent Needs page](#) to locate COVID-19 volunteer efforts across DFW. The listings on this page are slowly growing, and it is the best way to stay up-to-date on the most current needs and getting signed up.

[Meals on Wheels](#) volunteers are needed. The UNTHSC Center for Geriatrics has adopted a daily Meals on Wheels route for meal delivery to homebound Fort Worth seniors. Please contact [Sarah@mealsonwheels.org](mailto:Sarah@mealsonwheels.org) to sign up for the 'UNTHSC Center for Geriatrics' route.

### **HSC COVID Relief Fund**

Through the **HSC COVID Relief Fund**, you can help HSC students facing personal hardships, inspire the work of HSC researchers, or supply front line health care workers with the personal protective equipment (PPE) they so desperately need. Visit [unthsc.edu/covidrelief](http://unthsc.edu/covidrelief) for more information.

---