

Family guide for virtual visits

Information, tips and ideas to support quality social connections with loved ones

Virtual visits provide important psychosocial health and wellness support to patients and residents. Whether they're receiving care in a hospital, in a long term care home or in their home, virtual visits help to ensure loved ones are part of their overall care plan and have opportunities to visit virtually.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information and ideas, as well as provide answers to frequently asked questions for successful virtual visits.

Goals for a successful virtual visit

1. Provide an opportunity for patients and residents to connect with their loved ones
2. Enable self-expression of thought and needs
3. Maintain communication skills
4. Foster socialization with family, friends, and the community
5. Help to honour and share memories
6. Maximize quality of life



Part A: Common questions about virtual visits with loved ones in care

How do I arrange for a virtual visit with a health care provider about my loved one?

If you would like to talk with a member of the health care team about your loved one's health status and care, please have the designated family member call the facility or unit nursing station directly to make a request or identify your concerns at the next planned care conference.

How do I make arrangements for a virtual visit?

Facility staff will make every effort to ensure that requests for virtual visits are accommodated. Information will be provided to you about who to contact and what the process is for booking a time for a virtual visit at your loved one's place of care.

What type of devices can be used for a virtual visit?

- **VCH shared devices:** Shared devices are available for those who do not have their own device. The type of device is usually a tablet and the most common video visit application is Zoom.
- **Personal devices:** Having access to a personal device allows for more flexibility for virtual visits and online activities. We encourage families to bring a personal device (e.g. a tablet,

iPad, or smartphone) that the patient or resident is comfortable using. Please contact the nursing station to make arrangements for the device to be delivered to the unit.

Please note: VCH cannot cover any data service costs associated with video appointments. VCH is not responsible for any damage or loss of personal device brought into the facility.

How much help can I get from VCH staff for a virtual visit?

VCH staff will assess what level of assistance is required for a successful virtual visit. Some patients and residents will identify as fully independent with their own device, while others, may require some type of assistance and this could change depending upon their health status at the time of a virtual call.

Staff on a unit will make every effort to ensure that someone is available to help. This might be a health care professional, office staff or a volunteer.

Can our family get any translation support?

Virtual translation support can be arranged if needed. Please call the facility or unit nursing station directly to request translation support.

Will our virtual visits be confidential?

- All VCH staff are ethically bound to uphold the confidentiality of all patients, residents and clients.
- All information collected for the purposes of virtual visits will be kept completely confidential.

How is our privacy protected?

- In accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, VCH staff will collect personal contact information needed to confirm your identity and enable you to access virtual visits.
- For most virtual video visits the Zoom application will be used. Like other mobile applications, Zoom requires permissions to access content on your device to function. For example, permission to access the camera and microphone enables users to have the video appointment.
- Just like online shopping or use of email, virtual video connections have some inherent privacy and security risks that your information may be intercepted or unintentionally disclosed.
- Please note that Wi-Fi networks in public spaces may be unsecure.
- We may send you registration invitations, appointment reminder notifications, and survey links. We will only send information to the personal email address or mobile phone which you have provided to us.

- In order to improve privacy and confidentiality, you should also take steps to participate in this virtual care encounter in a private setting and should not use an employer's or someone else's computer/device as they may be able to access your information.

Vancouver Coastal Health's Privacy notice can be viewed on our website at vch.ca. If you have questions regarding privacy or security, please contact the **VCH Information Privacy Office** by phone at (604) 875-5568 or email: privacy@vch.ca.

Part B: Plan in advance to ensure your virtual visit is a success

It's helpful if a family member or friend can be a key contact for organizing virtual visits. For a virtual visits to be a success, we recommend that one or two family members or friends are designated as the key contact(s). A VCH staff member will ask for contact information, device choice, and discuss consent and the role.

How you can help:

- Book the virtual visit on a day and time that works best for you
 - Provide the contact information (email addresses and mobile phone numbers) for all those participating in a virtual visit
 - Communicate information to other family members and friends such as sharing the virtual visit link
 - Facilitate family and friends during a virtual visit
 - Assist in trouble-shooting with device or technology issues on the call. Please ensure the staff have your mobile number.



How many family and friends should attend a virtual visit?

- Please talk to staff for the current health status of your loved one to determine the best number of people to be in the virtual visit. One or two visitors may be best depending on the situation.
- If more people in your family would like to socially connect during a booked time, you could consider the following:
 - Divide the time in your session time slot between people. For example, three sessions for 10 minutes in a 30 minute time slot. If you choose this approach, ensure that other family members are clear about their calling time to avoid interruptions.
 - Spread your visits out during your loved one's stay. This is easier to do if your loved one has their own device.

Please be aware that changing health status of your loved one or changing conditions at the facility or residence can impact your virtual visit.

Within the healthcare environment things can change that may cause changes to your virtual visit:

- The success of the visit depends upon your loved one's health status at the time. If they are feeling tired, unwell, less engaged, or showing increased confusion the visit may need to be shorter, ended or cancelled for another time.
- In some areas of care the visit may be changed at the last minute, cancelled or interrupted should urgent patient care needs arise.

Ideas for family and friends for having an engaging virtual visit

Below is a list of ideas for what you could plan to say and do during your virtual visit to keep your loved one and family members engaged:

- Consider what kind of information they would like to hear
- Invite young visitors (e.g. grandchildren) to share their school projects, artwork, sing, play an instrument or read-a-loud
- Share some facts: current events, describe the weather or tell them about your life
- Provide a tour of the garden and talk about the things you are growing
- Play their favourite music or sing with them
- Recall and talk about past events:
 - Talk about some of your most cherished memories
 - Use objects/triggers to stimulate memories
 - Show old photos (note: a glossy photo may cause glare)
- Introduce your pets on camera
- Tell a funny joke that your loved one may be familiar with or share a funny story

PART C: Tips for success before, during and after your virtual visit

Before your virtual visit ensure you are ready to avoid any problems. Here is a helpful checklist for family and friends for a smooth call:

- ✓ I have my preferred device that I know well: Email, tablet, smart phone or computer
- ✓ I am in a private space that's quiet (Fans, TVs, radios are turned off)
- ✓ I have good access to Wi-Fi or a network
- ✓ My device microphone and camera are on and working
- ✓ My device is set up for a Zoom call:
 - It's best to download, install, register and activate the Zoom app and your zoom account for a smoother experience and less technical difficulties. A Zoom icon will be on your device for easy access to Zoom and set up options.
 - It's not recommended to use a web browser (e.g. Google Chrome or Safari)
- ✓ My face is in full view on my device and my background is plain
 - Look into the camera for eye contact and keep lighting on your face rather than behind you
 - Plain backgrounds limit distractions
- ✓ I have joined the call a few minutes early by using the visit link that was emailed to me.
 - When your host is ready they will let you in, this may take a few minutes.

Need help with Zoom?

These resources are available online at vch.ca/virtualhealth:

- **Virtual Visit Quick Reference Guide for Hosts using an Android Tablet and Zoom:** This resource is for anyone designated as the “host” for a virtual visit. It's a 10 steps guide to success for an instant virtual visit between patients/residents and family/friends that highlights how to invite, admit, trouble-shoot and end a virtual visit.
- **Quick Tips Guide for Family and Friends.** How to join a virtual visit using Zoom: Options for all types of devices.

Need technical help?

Call toll-free 1-844-442-4433 for technical support (Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.).

During your virtual visit there are helpful things you can do

Please be aware that your loved one may not be able to focus or hear as well. This could be due to their current health status or the setting which may impair their ability to respond. These can include: type of illness, medications, pain, medical equipment, noise, cognitive decline, hearing loss.

Ways you can help during the visit:

- Reduce your physical movement; avoid multitasking
- If it's a small group, take turns speaking and avoid more than one person talking at once or more than one conversation happening at the same time
- Speak slower, louder, clearly and repeat as needed
- Use a wipe board and write words on it
- Use objects or images to support what you are saying
- Take pauses to allow transmission delay
- Use gestures, waves, and nods to show that you are listening

Ideas for what you can say to keep the talking going:

- *Repeat the last word that they said*
- *"Tell me more..."*
- *"What does that mean to you?"*
- *"What do you like to do at your home?"*
- *"How did that make you feel?"*

My loved one is unable to talk. How do I know if they are enjoying the virtual visit?

If your loved one is unable to talk (non-verbal and implied communication), here are some signs that they show understanding and expression:

- Gestures such as nodding and smiling
- Laughter
- Vocalization without words
- Making eye contact with the screen
- Reaching out to touch the screen or the face of someone on the call

Are you attending a virtual visit with a loved one with dementia?

See our [guide: Communication tips for family and friends](https://vch.ca/virtualhealth) available at vch.ca/virtualhealth. It offers a list of tips and examples of what you can say and do that may be helpful during both in-person and virtual visits.

After your virtual visit

If you notice anything on the call about your loved one that concerns you please call the nursing station and ask to speak to someone on the health care team. You will be connected with the best person to address your concern.

**We encourage on-going virtual social connections.
Please schedule further visits as needed.**