

Preparing for a virtual consultation

We have added some helpful tips on preparing for a virtual consultation to help you get the most out of your appointment.

In advance of your appointment:

1. Make a list of any question you may have and mention these at the beginning of the consultation. Note down all the medications you are currently taking, including your topical treatments and make your healthcare professional aware of these
2. If this is your first appointment with a doctor or nurse, they may need to know what treatments you have used in the past, for how long you used them and how effective they were, so make a note of these
3. Ensure your healthcare professional has the correct contact number to reach you
4. The phone call from the healthcare professional will frequently show on your phone as "No Caller ID" or number withheld and may not take place at the exact time of the previously booked face-to-face appointment
5. Find a quiet, comfortable area where you will not be disturbed during your appointment. If you are having a video appointment, make sure the lighting is good so your healthcare professional can see you clearly. Try to take the call where you have a good telephone/internet connection in your home
6. Take photographs of any problems you might be having if necessary in case your healthcare professional asks to see them during the appointment. Photographs can sometimes provide better clarity than a video
7. During the appointment you may be asked to estimate how your joint symptoms are, so think about this in advance
8. Keep a note of all your symptoms, however mild, in between appointments so you can refer to them during the consultation
9. If you require any particular provisions to be made for your appointment (i.e. if you have hearing loss or you require an interpreter), ask a friend or relative to contact the hospital in advance to make alternative arrangements on your behalf.

During your appointment

1. Your healthcare professional should introduce themselves clearly and will request confirmation that they are talking to the correct person. This is likely to be your name, your date of birth and the first line of your address
2. Be honest and descriptive about how your condition is affecting you
3. Don't be afraid to ask questions during the appointment and ask for clarification if you are unsure of any of the answers. Ask your healthcare professional to repeat themselves if you miss something
4. Make notes of what your healthcare professional says during the appointment as arrangements for things like blood tests and collection of prescriptions may be slightly different to usual during this time
5. Be honest if coping during lock down has led to an increase in your alcohol or drug-use, or over-eating has led to weight gain, as this may mean your treatments need to be adjusted accordingly
6. Treat the appointment the same as you would a face-to-face consultation, as the same amount of time will have been allocated. Re-lax and take your time. It is important not to feel rushed, be thorough and explain all your symptoms including how you are feeling, itching, pain and discomfort. As with face-to-face consultations it is important to ask, as well as answer, questions
7. Be sure to mention all recent illnesses and to make the healthcare professional aware of your current circumstances, particularly in relation to 'shielding'; or if you have been told that you are at an increased risk of contracting COVID-19
8. The consultation should finish with a summary of the key points, a plan for further treatment and a follow up appointment, if relevant. Don't be afraid to ask questions regarding whether this will be face-to-face, over the telephone or by video, or to ask questions about visiting the hospital.