

UHealth Providers Make House Calls via Virtual Visits

Telehealth technology delivers expert care in the patient's home. Here's how it works.

“Coronavirus demands that we rethink and expand health care delivery options,” says Allan D. Levi, M.D., Ph.D., Chair of Neurosurgery at the University of Miami Health System. “Telemedicine has been around many years but is gaining momentum as an alternative to in-person appointments. Using electronic devices most people have on hand; this technology allows health care providers to quickly diagnose and treat patients without their having to leave home. At this time, providers are especially aware of the need to increase efficiency while protecting public health and minimizing patient stress. Telemedicine helps us achieve those goals.”

How does telemedicine work?

A telemedicine or telehealth appointment is similar to a Zoom, FaceTime, or Skype video conference call. During your virtual appointment, you face the camera on your smartphone, computer, or tablet.

When your session begins, you see yourself and your healthcare provider on the screen. Your provider asks questions and discusses your care, just as they would in a face-to-face appointment.

“A patient tells me about their symptoms, and we can review their images on-line and determine if a neurosurgical operative procedure makes sense to fix the problem. The patients I've seen in virtual visits seem more willing to discuss their

health; they seem to feel less hurried than they do in an office visit, and they certainly enjoy not having to leave the comfort of their own couch to speak to a doctor,” Dr. Levi says.

To access the telehealth services, you need a high-speed internet connection and a smartphone, tablet, or computer. (Your device must have a camera and microphone.) The next step is registering on UHealth’s secure patient portal, MyUHealthChart. You then download Zoom video conferencing software on your device. To protect patient privacy, UHealth’s telehealth technology uses a special version of Zoom video conferencing software, integrated with MyUHealthChart.

Virtual visits are covered by most insurance plans and are available by appointment for a wide variety of non-emergency conditions. Participating providers represent nearly every specialty and see patients of all ages.

While Dr. Levi believes telehealth is here to stay, it will not replace in-person visits.

“There is no substitute for a detailed neurological exam, and so we will not be getting rid of the in-person visits anytime soon. Interestingly, we can do a modified neurological exam using telehealth and glean important information virtually.”

Which telehealth option should you use?

UHealth offers three options for primary, specialty, and urgent care:

1. **UHealth Virtual Clinics:** primary and specialty care from board-certified doctors and nurse practitioners.
2. **MyCareConnection:** urgent care from board-certified doctors and nurse practitioners.

3. **UHealth Clinics at Walgreens:** primary care from licensed nurse practitioners for minor illnesses and injuries, as well as preventative care.

For more information, call 305-243-4000, Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.- 6 p.m. or visit UMiamiHealth.org/VirtualClinics.

Nancy Moreland is a contributing writer for UMiami Health News. She has written for several major health care systems and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. You can also find her writings in the Chicago Tribune.

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