

British Association of Dermatologists, June 2020

COVID-19: Guidance for dermatology patients for remote consultations



Remote dermatology consultations

- The situation with Covid-19 (as at 30th June 2020) means that NHS hospitals, and dermatology departments, have had to change the way they interact with patients
- Dermatologists and Dermatology Nurses want to treat or go on treating their patients in the best possible way whilst protecting patients, their team and the hospital from unnecessary spreading of the virus
- For this reason, you may be offered a telephone, or online voice or video call, instead of a face-to-face appointment. These are dealt with separately below
- The increased use of phone and video consultations aims to open up new opportunities for doctors and patients to interact safely, effectively and conveniently
- Not all trusts or patients have access to the same technology, so your experiences are likely to vary based on your local hospital, and the dermatological condition for which you have been referred. We are therefore only able to offer general guidance on what to expect
- Dermatologists may be able to examine a hair, skin or nail problem, check suspicious areas on the skin for signs of skin cancer, maintain ongoing treatment for chronic conditions and prescribe medication during remote consultations
- Depending on the outcome of your appointment, you may need to go into hospital for a face-to-face appointment

Before the appointment

- Your hospital will decide which type of appointment (phone, video or face-to-face) to offer you based on several factors
- They may then contact you to confirm the appointment and that you have the required technology, don't worry if you don't have this, a phone call will always be available as a back-up option
- If you're offered a video appointment, you'll receive a link with instructions on how to join the appointment, there will also be details on how to check your device is set-up correctly in advance
- If you don't want to do video, you have a right to say no, check the link you are sent so that you know how to turn video off
- Work out what questions you want to ask and make a note
- If the consultation is for a child, encourage them to prepare their own questions in advance, if appropriate
- Prepare a list of your recent medication, any changes to medication and dosages, as well as any over-the-counter medicines you are taking
- Ask a family member to be with you if you'd like
- If the consultation is for a child, an adult must be there
- You don't need to show intimate parts of your body online, but if the appointment is for diagnosis be prepared to share photographs of the area of skin you're worried about beforehand, if you are comfortable with this. *See page 5 for tips on taking images*
- Make sure the device you're using is charged! Try and be somewhere with stable internet or mobile connection, depending on the appointment type
- Make sure you won't be disturbed and will be able to hear the call



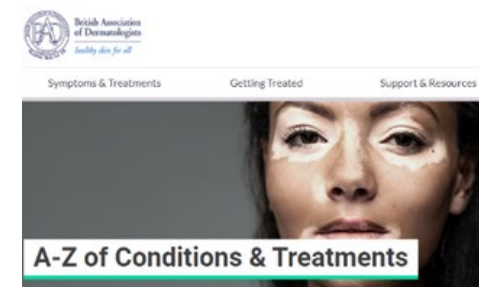
During the appointment

- The appointment may not take place at the exact time so clear some time either side
- Remember that the technology may fail! Make sure you know how to reconnect if you get cut off
- Be somewhere quiet where you can talk freely and hear clearly
- If the appointment is for a child, if possible and appropriate, encourage them to play an active role in the consultation
- You can tell the Doctor what you are experiencing and feeling about your skin condition
- Discuss the diagnosis and/or treatment plan
- If you're being prescribed medication, find out how to collect your prescription, whether it will be sent directly to your local pharmacy or GP
- Ask when you will see the dermatologist again
- You can also ask about support for your condition and access to psychological support



After the appointment

- Take photos of the area of skin you're treating before starting treatment, *see page 5 for tips on taking images*
- Read the patient information leaflet with your medication carefully
- Mark when you start treating the area of skin on your calendar



- Check out patient support resources for your condition: <https://bit.ly/3cu0sQo>
- Look at the NHS app for more information: <https://bit.ly/370N8Si>
- Make a note of questions you'd like to ask at your next appointment as you go along, for example any reaction you may have to the medicine that you are using

Questions you may wish to ask

If this is a diagnosis/first appointment

- Ask any questions about the condition you want to
- Ask about treatment options
- How does the recommended treatment work?
- How long do you use or take the treatment for?
- Is the medication easy to get?
- What might be the side effects?
- Will your skin get completely better?
- Is there anything else you can do to help your skin like diet or moisturisers, or anything you should stop doing?
- What happens if you decide not to treat your skin condition?

If this is a review of an ongoing condition

- Ask about any new treatment or changes to existing treatment frequencies
- Make sure you are clear about any changes
- Work out a time to come back and review the changes together



Taking images for your appointment

If it's your first appointment after being referred to a dermatologist, your GP is likely to have already shared your images from your GP appointment using a secure platform, with your permission. If your appointment is a follow-up appointment with a dermatologist, the hospital may contact you directly beforehand if they need further images, they will provide details of how to do this securely.



There are the usual risks associated with sending any images via the internet, however once the image has been received by a healthcare professional, any onward data transfer and storage will meet the NHS data protection and information governance requirements of the health care organisation. Your doctor will explain by sending these images you consent to them being held in your medical record. In some cases, they may also ask for consent for the images in teaching. For your security, think about background. Think about any pictures you have taken of the condition – delete off device in every location or store them securely.

Tips for taking a clear image

- Make sure your pictures are well lit, making use of natural light where possible
- An ideal background will offer contrast with the colour of skin
- Take multiple photos from different angles to include all sides of the area you're concerned about
- Make sure the area is in focus, on smartphones you can focus by clicking the area of interest on the screen
- You could place something, such as a coin, on the skin to offer context of the size of lesion
- Don't wear make-up on the area that you're concerned about in the image or during the appointment
- If the area is hard to reach, ask a friend or family member to take the photo, if possible

- You may need to retake the photo a few times to get one which isn't blurry

Further information

- Introduction to Cyber Security <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/introduction-to-cyber-security>
- Video consulting information for patients <https://design-science.org.uk/nhs-video-consulting/>
(<https://twitter.com/DesignScienceUK/status/1251171409197502464/photo/1>)
- How older people can have a successful video GP appointment <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2020/06/how-older-people-can-have-a-successful-video-gp-appointment>