

VIRTUAL CARE AND THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

OntarioMD and the Ontario Medical Association are committed to helping raise awareness to physicians and their practices about tools that they might consider in supporting their patient community during the COVID-19 pandemic. While OntarioMD has not evaluated these tools and does not endorse one tool over another, we believe there is value in curating a [list of tools](#) to which OntarioMD has visibility based on our relationships and/or engagements with various provincial and national stakeholders. We encourage all practices to contact vendors directly for product-specific questions. Our curated list will be regularly updated with new information.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Screening:

- Use EMR-enabled tools to:
- Assess illness (templated forms)
- Triage for care or screening (questionnaires)
- Clinical notes to record virtual visits
- Direct patients quickly to:
 - Self-care
 - In-office visit
 - Screening/testing facilities
 - Acute care facility (ER) when required

2. Care for patients with suspected COVID-19:

- Use virtual means to keep contact with patients who have symptoms and who you are monitoring
- Reassess patients virtually if worsening

3. Care for regular patients:

- Use virtual care tools to avoid unnecessary trips to the office
- Manage chronic disease
- Managing other acute illness that may not require a physical exam

As of March 14, telephone/video fee codes are available through regular OHIP billing. Details of rules around billing the new K080 (virtual minor assessment or equivalent), K081 (virtual intermediate assessment or equivalent), K082 (mental health and counselling or equivalent) and K083 (specialist) codes can be found on the [OMA website](#). Note that these codes are in-basket for capitated and alternate payment models, but should be shadow-billed. These codes are also eligible for after-hours premiums.

Any direct-to-patient telephone, telemedicine and video calling platforms can now be used as the work is remunerated with the new fee codes, rather than the platform you choose. This allows rapid and wide scaling of care that works best in your area. When choosing, consider how easy the product is for you use, how easy it is for patients to use, how the product can help you keep patient information private and secure, and that you must record the work in your medical record.

Additional technical guidance may be provided by the Ministry in the coming days to inform product selection and if / when that happens. OntarioMD will update its [virtual care tools page](#) accordingly. Consider the right type of contact, for the right patient, at the right time, for the right problem. Video conferencing is payable under the fee codes above, but telephone calls, email and texts to patients may all be useful for care, even if not discretely funded.

There are virtual care products where consent from the patient is handled at sign-up. There are also products that may be used in health care where health specific express consent for use is recommended to be obtained; we have presented the products with this distinction on the [virtual care tools page](#). If you choose a product that is not typically used in health care, then you should ask patients for their consent.

Information vetted by OMA and OntarioMD legal teams and the CMPA has been created to make this easier. More information to help support the consent process is available on the [OMA's coronavirus page](#). We suggest using the standard consent language template be added to your website, posted in your office or be made available to patients and adapted for when you explain it to them. The consent language template is available on the [OntarioMD virtual tools page](#).

You should also record that verbal express consent was obtained when using a product that does not have explicit health care consent. A standard consent language template to copy into your EMR is available on the [OntarioMD virtual tools page](#).

Your OntarioMD-certified electronic medical record (EMR) may have virtual care capabilities you can leverage during the COVID-19 pandemic. OntarioMD is working with vendors of certified EMRs to identify these services and facilitate your access to them.

HOW CAN YOU USE VIRTUAL CARE TOOLS?

Please visit [OntarioMD's virtual care page](#) for a list of curated resources under these categories:

- Video Visit Platforms Created for Medical Care (and other video conferencing platforms)
- Direct to Patient Virtual and Digital Tools for Practice
- Virtual Clinics That Can Be Made Available to Patients Should Your Practice Become Unavailable
- OntarioMD-Certified EMRs
- Other Resources

OntarioMD also recommends that physicians keep up-to-date with COVID-19 news as it relates to your practice by reading OMA President's Updates, OMA Member Alerts, and by visiting [OMA.org](#).