

MYELOMA CANADA
MAKING MYELOMA MATTER

VIRTUAL CARE

APPOINTMENT GUIDE

for Canadians with Multiple Myeloma

WHAT IS 'VIRTUAL CARE'?

In the last few years, 'virtual care'—also referred to as 'telehealth'—alternatives to in-person healthcare appointments have become very common. Virtual care allows you to connect to a healthcare provider without an in-office appointment, through alternative means such as a video chat or phone call. To attend virtual care appointments, you can use a smartphone, tablet, or log on from a computer, from the comfort of your home. *Virtual care services are covered under most provincial health plans (excluding dental).*

WHAT'S IN THIS GUIDE?

This Virtual Care Appointment Guide provides you with the information and help you may need for your virtual care appointment. This is meant solely as a starter guide which you can **modify and customize to your needs. Topics covered include:**

1. Before your appointment
2. On the appointment day
3. During your appointment
4. After your appointment
5. Between appointments

Note: *We recommend using this resource in conjunction with the Myeloma Canada* ***Virtual Care Appointment Planner****.*



BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT

Virtual care can be a great tool, especially for Canadians living with myeloma. It offers remote access to a second opinion or a myeloma specialist, minimizes the risk of exposure to a virus or infection, and cuts down travel time. Having said that, virtual care might not be the best choice for every circumstance.

Recently when booking your healthcare appointments, you have likely been offered the choice to conduct some of these remotely, either virtually (video chat) or by phone. There are pros and cons to both in-person and virtual care, so it's important to select the option that best suits *your* needs.

You can ask yourself the following questions to help you choose which is right for you:

IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL APPOINTMENT?

1. Why are you booking this appointment?
2. What do you want to get out of this appointment, i.e., what is its purpose?
3. Is it a routine appointment (e.g., check-up), or in response to an acute issue?
4. How long is the appointment expected to be?
5. Do you think a doctor needs to see, or feel, something at this appointment?
6. How comfortable do you feel being at the doctor's office?
   - Is the present risk of contracting a virus or infection too great?
   - Would the trip worsen any symptoms?
7. How easy is it to travel to your appointment?

Avoiding technology troubles

If you will be having a video call, your appointment confirmation will likely tell you what platform it will be conducted on. If you're unfamiliar with the program needed for your appointment or haven't used it for a while, be sure to practice, ask someone for help, or sign up for a lesson.

Libraries, community centres and other organizations across Canada offer classes and other useful resources to help adults familiarize themselves with new technologies.



PREPARE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT IN ADVANCE

1. If the appointment is through a video call software (e.g., Zoom, GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts, etc), have the details for the call-in number or internet link in a place where you can easily find it.
2. Arrange for anyone you want/need with you to be available for the call, such as your caregiver, a partner/family member, or very close friend for support.
   - You might want a translator with you if the appointment will not be conducted in your first language, or someone to ask questions for you if you are not able.
3. Develop a list of questions you want to ask the doctor and any requests you have:
   - e.g., renewal of prescriptions, referrals, treatment plan, or any medical updates including the need for another biomarker test.
4. Have you arranged for a copy of your test results or bloodwork to be sent to the doctor?

ON THE APPOINTMENT DAY

PRE- APPOINTMENT PREPARATION

On the day of the appointment, if you have invited anyone to join you, remind them what time they are needed.

Is everything you need for the appointment ready and accessible?

1. Do I have on hand, my Provincial Health Card number? (e.g., BC Services Card, OHIP card, RAMQ, etc.)
2. If I have one, my cancer centre or hospital card number?
3. Have I made a list of all the drugs, vitamins and/or natural supplements I am taking (and their active ingredients)?
4. Do I have a list of the prescription numbers for these drugs and the pharmacies/hospitals that provide them, including their fax and phone numbers?
5. Do I know my current weight?
6. Are all my healthcare providers' full names and contact information, including phone number, **fax number,** and address, easily accessible to me?



Creating the right appointment environment

a) Leave yourself some time, both before and after your scheduled appointment time in case your healthcare provider is early or late (ideally 2 hours on each end).

b) Make sure you find a private place for your appointment that will remain **quiet and distraction-free until your appointment is finished.**

c) Check that you have enough space to make notes, sit comfortably and that there's room for anyone else you've invited to attend.

DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

GETTING THE BEST RESULTS FROM A VIRTUAL CARE APPOINTMENT

1. **Accept calls from blocked or unknown numbers.** Both the doctor/healthcare provider and administrative assistant may well be working offsite and may be calling from "private" numbers.
2. **Ensure you have a reliable internet connection** and functioning webcam and speakers for virtual online appointments.
3. **If you wish to record the appointment, ask your healthcare provider at the beginning of the call if this is all right with them.** Do not tape a call without the other party's permission.
4. **Have a pen and paper ready and take notes.** If you can, keep a separate diary for these notes or use the Myeloma Canada Virtual Care Planner.
5. **Have the list of questions and requests for your appointment beside the device** you'll be using for the meeting, including any symptoms you've been keeping track of since your last visit and any patterns you may have noticed. You can easily record these in the Virtual Care Planner.
6. **Remember that reporting all the details of symptoms and concerns is not complaining** but helpful to the healthcare provider working with, and trying to assist you.
7. **Have a medication list/bottles and pharmacy information** ready by the device you're using for the appointment.



8. **Have glasses, hearing aids, walking aids** or other aids you require ready and nearby.
9. If you are placed on hold or asked to wait, please continue to stay either online or by the phone until your appointment begins. **Exiting the video call, or hanging up the phone while on hold can be considered by healthcare providers as 'missing an appointment.'**
10. Be sure to tell your doctor/healthcare provider if there's anything they're saying that you don't understand. Ask them to explain and spell out medical terms so you can write them down.
    - Tell your doctor/healthcare provider if you cannot hear, you need them to speak more slowly, or are having any technical problems with the call. Interrupting someone mid-sentence can feel especially awkward through a screen, but **the sooner you let them know, the less they'll have to repeat.**
    - You could say…. *"I'm sorry to cut you off, but the internet connection is making it difficult for me to understand you. Would you mind speaking more slowly?"*
11. **If you need the doctor/healthcare provider to follow up with anything in writing, let them know,** and/or remind them at the end of the call.
    - e.g., you would like more information on a treatment option, upcoming clinical trial or funding program they mentioned, etc.
12. **Confirm any next steps agreed upon during the appointment by repeating them back** to the healthcare provider and describing what you understand will happen next.
13. Let the doctor/healthcare provider know if you feel you need another *virtual* appointment and when.
14. Let the doctor/healthcare provider know if you feel that you need an *in-office* appointment and how urgently.
15. **If a follow-up appointment is required, ask them how and when** you should schedule it.



AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT

TO-DO

1. Review any notes you made during the call and look up any words or concepts you need more clarity on.
   - Myeloma Canada has a wealth of information and resources on myeloma, its treatments, clinical trials, drug coverage (and more) available at no charge at **www.myeloma.ca**... it's a great place to start!
2. Follow up on any items that need your attention e.g., (re) filling a prescription or making an appointment with another doctor/healthcare provider.
3. Note the date of your next appointment in your calendar.

BETWEEN APPOINTMENTS

MONITORING YOUR MYELOMA

One potential drawback of virtual healthcare is the physical distance it puts between our bodies, and the people who care for them. **We as patients can help with this potential problem through good communication**. Listening to your body and being able to clearly communicate what it's telling you, can ensure that your doctors have *all the information they need to best help you.* This means keeping track of your health, by keeping records of symptoms, medications, changes in your health, test results, appointments, etc.

Consult the following page for a list of things to keep track of.



A FEW THINGS TO KEEP TRACK OF...

- Keep track of all your medications, medical results, and allow you to graph your blood test results to see how they've changed over time.
- Before your next appointment, keep track of any new or flaring symptoms to share with your doctor/healthcare provider, including whether there are any new patterns to their appearance. If you feel these are too important to wait until the next scheduled appointment, contact your doctor.
- Take a picture to document the progression of any physical symptoms such as swelling, redness or rash to either show, or send, to your healthcare provider.
- Organize the most important information in a calendar; this can help you with reminders and personalized filing sections.
- Print out any practical reports for your files and your medical team.
- Keep track of any feelings you might have or changes in your emotional state. Record both instances in which you may feel worried, scared, depressed, or anxious, as well as the moments you feel loved, relieved, supported, or happy. If you see negative patterns emerge you can talk to your healthcare team about seeing a specialist and/or reach out to your local Support Group or the Myeloma Peer Support Program.
- Record any questions you might have for your healthcare team right when you think of them.

Myeloma Canada has a wealth of resources and information on myeloma, its treatments, clinical trials, drug coverage and much more. These are all available to you, at no charge, on our website at **www.myeloma.ca**...

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