

## Risk Tip: Successful Telemedicine Visits

When practiced well, telemedicine increases convenience and access while it decreases costs for patients and providers. But telemedicine is not without risk.

Technology is great, until it doesn't work. Don't assume e-visits won't get interrupted. It's important for practices to consider how such instances will be handled. If an appointment is interrupted, how will connectivity be restored? Also consider how appointments will be continued and whether the data has been captured.

Telemedicine represents new opportunities for data leaks that need to be considered. Make security a priority. Safeguarding patient data is a major concern for any practice.

Ensure your patients are aware of and consent to the potential risks and benefits associated with telemedicine. This could include the potential for delays that result from equipment failure and the potential for security breaches. Talk with your patients about what they can expect from a telemedicine encounter, including those situations when a face-to-face visit is prudent.

### Eight tips to make the most of telemedicine visits:

1. **Connect.** Verbally, express your desire to connect with your on-screen patient. Non-verbally, express this desire by maintaining eye contact, smiling, nodding—whatever feels comfortable to you. Be sure to adjust the camera height to ensure appropriate eye contact.
2. **Engage.** The e-visit requires reciprocity in order to be successful. Encourage your patient to participate by demonstrating your own interest in the interaction. Again, use what feels natural and authentic. Use humor appropriately.
3. **Structure.** Just like your in-person interactions, your online encounters should be organized for effectiveness.
4. **Clarify.** Watch your patient's non-verbal cues for signs you need to further explain. Don't just repeat yourself—use clear language and restate to ensure better understanding. Avoid acronyms, jargon, idioms, and words that can have multiple meanings.
5. **Reinforce.** What does your patient need to know from this interaction? Listeners can't retain everything from a conversation, which is why using techniques like storytelling and repetition can be good tools to help with retention.
6. **Explain.** If you break eye contact with the patient, explain what you're doing. Face-to-face, he could see you're taking notes. On screen it's not obvious and can be perceived as inattention.
7. **Synthesize.** Ask your patient to repeat what she's learned and what you expect her to do next. It's your job to ensure your communication was effective.
8. **Reimbursement.** Reimbursement of telemedicine charges should be clarified up front.