

AUSTRALIAN CLINICAL GUIDE FOR USING TELEHEALTH

for people with diabetes-related foot disease during the COVID-19 pandemic

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BACKGROUND

With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, clinicians around the world are being asked to use telehealth consultations to replace face-to-face consultations. Yet, using telehealth to care for a person with diabetes-related foot disease (DFD) can be quite a challenge, as care typically requires multidisciplinary care, including counselling, physical assessment and physical therapy. Thus, not all face-to-face care can be replaced by telehealth. But some aspects of DFD care may be replaced as the primary benefit of telehealth allows access to health professional advice where mobility, location and COVID-19 restrictions are problematic.

GUIDE

The following is a guide to help Australian clinicians who are considering using telehealth as an alternative service type to augment the care of their patients with DFD during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guide is designed to support clinicians to consider key DFD elements to determine the suitability, preparation, consultation and documentation needed to help ensure an effective telehealth consultation.

PLEASE NOTE

This DFD-specific telehealth guide is a “living document” and may be updated as we learn more about the use of telehealth during the evolving COVID-19 situation. This guide should be used in conjunction with the following key general telehealth resources:

1. Diabetic Foot Australian clinical triage guide for people with DFD during the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Australian Diabetes Society Telehealth website guide during COVID-19
3. Australian Podiatry Association Telehealth webpage for managing foot-related conditions
4. AHPRA COVID-19 Telehealth webpage
5. Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) New COVID-19 Telehealth MBS Items.



TRIAGE SUITABILITY

Refer to the [Australian clinical triage guide](#) for people with DFD to determine if your patient/client can be managed via telehealth. Patients/clients with critical or highly serious limb &/or life threatening status will not be able to be managed using telehealth.



PATIENT PREPARATION

Refer to the [Australian Diabetes Society Telehealth guide during COVID-19](#) for steps to determine what general information you and your patient/client will need to prepare for your telehealth consultation.



SETTING UP TELEHEALTH

Refer to the [AHPRA](#) website for general telehealth guidance for health practitioners. Refer to the [Australian Podiatry Association](#) website for foot-related telehealth information.



MBS TELEHEALTH ITEMS

Refer to the [MBS website](#) for more information on the new temporary MBS telehealth items that have been made available to reimburse telehealth consultations during the COVID-19 situation.



AUSTRALIAN CLINICAL GUIDE FOR USING TELEHEALTH

Steps to prepare, conduct and document a telehealth consultation for people with diabetes-related foot disease during the COVID-19 pandemic

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER BEFORE THE CONSULTATION

DETERMINE THE SUITABILITY FOR A TELEHEALTH CONSULTATION FOR YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT



- Confirm the limb &/or life threatening status and if it is appropriate to be cared for with telehealth
- Willingness to provide informed verbal or written consent to be cared for via telehealth
- Access to appropriate hardware/software required to undertake a telehealth consultation

If answered yes to ALL then the patient may be suitable for a telehealth consultation

DETERMINE IF YOU HAVE/OR CAN OBTAIN THE BELOW HISTORY FROM YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT



- General medical history, including medication and diabetes history
- DFD treatment history, including any applicable blood or microbiological results, wound dressings, antibiotics, offloading and other services used
- Recent DFD classification information, including the site, ischaemia, neuropathy, infection, size and depth status

If answered yes to ALL then the patient may be suitable for a telehealth consultation

CONTACT YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT TO DETERMINE IF YOU CAN OBTAIN THE FOLLOWING IMAGES



Close up shot of the entire ulcer



Midway shot with 4-6cm of healthy skin surrounding the ulcer



Distant shot capturing the entire foot



Opposite mid-way shot capturing the opposite side of the foot



Good lighting or with flash to minimise any shadows



Recent chronological series of the images*

If answered yes to ALL then the patient may be suitable for a telehealth consultation

*Preferred but not required

DURING THE VIDEO CONSULTATION

SET AGREED TELEHEALTH RULES WITH YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT



- Complete introduction to telehealth consultation and seek verbal/written consent for using telehealth
- Check all personal details provided and confirm images provided for the consultation by the patient/client are correct
- Discuss 'at-home' assistance available for the consultation and troubleshoot how best to view the feet via telehealth

DISCUSS GENERAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH WITH YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT



- Discuss how your patient/client is coping and what support and assistance is available at home
- Discuss any fears/concerns for both foot-related and mental health
- Use the time to develop a rapport as your patient/client may feel more comfortable conversing in their own environment

VIEW FEET AND ASK YOUR PATIENT/CLIENT THE FOLLOWING



- To remove shoes and socks and position feet so you can see the ulcer
- To remove dressing so you can see both the dressing, the dressing in contact with the ulcer, and the ulcer
- Ask about any recent changes to the ulcer, including redness, swelling, pain, discharge, leakage, odour, difficulty with dressing changes, and using offloading devices
- Show you how dressings are applied and self-care routine for the feet and ulcer: then provide tips if/where applicable
- Demonstrate walking using prescribed offloading device: then provide tips if/where applicable

NEXT STEPS

ADVICE

- Discuss the next steps to care for the ulcer/DFD before the next consultation, including dressing changes, offloading, and who/when to contact if the foot status changes
- Offer further resources/links that can help with ulcer prevention or healing
- Check your patient/client understand or have a level of understanding and ask to repeat these next steps in their own words

REBOOKING

- Ask your patient/client if they would be happy to undertake a telehealth consult in the future
- Determine if the next consultation is appropriate for telehealth or face-to-face
- Rebook your patient/client for the next consultation via face-to-face or telehealth

DOCUMENT

- Document all the above steps in the your patient/client medical record as you normally would and include images supplied
- Highlight that the consultation was undertaken via telehealth and what information and technology was used

NOTE: This information should not be seen as medical advice and we do not assume liability or responsibility for damages or injury to any person or property arising from any use of any information, idea or construction in this guide.

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