

## Virtual Care

# What to Expect

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia is committed to your protection and safety. This is a summary of what you can expect when receiving virtual care from your physician or surgeon.

Virtual care refers to medical care that is provided through technology and not in-person, such as over the telephone or through online video conferencing (like Zoom or FaceTime).



### General expectations

**Before providing you with virtual care, your physician or surgeon must:**

- seek to understand any barriers you may face in participating in virtual care (such as limited access to technology) and address these barriers to the extent possible
- make sure they have proper training and skills to engage with you through virtual care.

**During the virtual care visit, your physician or surgeon must:**

- tell you their name, where they are located, where they are licensed, what type of physician or surgeon they are, and confirm your identity if they have not met you before
- explain the appropriateness, limitations, and privacy issues related to virtual care to you during your first virtual care visit with them
- make sure that you are aware of anyone else who might be participating in the virtual care visit (such as other health-care professionals)
- provide you with an appropriate medical assessment based on your current symptoms or condition, history, medications, and limited physical examination
- consider whether virtual care is the most appropriate way to provide you with care, and if an in-person assessment is necessary, they must arrange for a timely in-person assessment done by either themselves or another physician or nurse practitioner
- ensure that if you need a referral to a specialist that you are properly assessed beforehand
- not prescribe opioid medications, psychotropic medications or cannabis to you unless they have an ongoing treating relationship with you or they (or another licensed health-care practitioner with whom they are in direct contact) have personally examined you
  - **Note:** For the purposes of initiating opioid agonist treatment (OAT), physicians can examine you either in-person or virtually.

**Following the virtual care visit, your physician or surgeon must:**

- maintain a medical record of the virtual care visit according to professional and legal requirements
- make sure that you have access to your medical record and that your record is available to other health-care professionals who may be providing you with ongoing care and treatment
- communicate appropriately with other health-care providers involved in your care

To learn more, read the College's practice standard [Virtual Care](#).