

Tele-rehabilitation in Physiotherapy

Patient Information



Tele-rehabilitation is the use of information or communication technologies to allow you and your physiotherapist to connect via video or other remote monitoring technology to receive physiotherapy services at a distance when an in-person visit is not possible¹. Here are a few frequently asked questions about tele-rehabilitation in physiotherapy.

When might tele-rehabilitation be appropriate?

- Tele-rehabilitation may be appropriate if you cannot easily attend an in-person visit because there is a shortage of appropriate physiotherapy care available in the region where you live or because you have transportation or mobility problems.
- Tele-rehabilitation may be used to augment your ongoing treatment by enabling your treating physiotherapist or other health care provider to consult with a physiotherapist who has a skill set uniquely suited to your individual needs.
- Tele-rehabilitation may offer a way for you to receive follow-up care by your original treating physiotherapist if you are no longer in the location where the initial treatment was provided.

When would tele-rehabilitation not be appropriate?

- Tele-rehabilitation has limitations compared to an in-person encounter such as the inability to perform hands-on examination, assessment and treatment. For this reason, in many circumstances, if suitable in-person care is available it will be preferable.
- It is up to you and the physiotherapist to determine what is best for you, based on your particular condition and preference, available technology, and other risks and benefits.

Will I get safe and effective quality of care?

Expect to receive the same safe, quality care that you would get during an in-person visit. The College expects physiotherapists to meet the same standards of practice regardless of how the services are delivered.

What are the risks of receiving care via tele-rehabilitation?

The risks of receiving physiotherapy care specific to tele-rehabilitation relate mostly to concerns about the privacy of your personal health information, and your personal safety. The physiotherapist is required to ensure that the location where you receive care is safe, and that procedures are in place to ensure the availability of help in the event of an emergency. The physiotherapist may recommend that the visit proceed in the presence of another person to enhance the safety and value of the visit.

¹ Tele-rehabilitation can include mediums such as videoconferencing, email, apps, web-based communication, wearable technology.

Will my personal information still be private and secure?

Physiotherapists are required to ensure the privacy and security of your personal information at all times. This extends to the technology they use as well as the appropriateness of the setting in which services are delivered. For example, it may be appropriate for you to receive services in your home or at a medical facility, with the physiotherapist communicating with you from their office rather than in a public place.

Do I have to pay for tele-rehabilitation physiotherapy services?

It depends. Some physiotherapy services may be covered by government funding, for example if you are having a follow up visit after discharge from hospital. If the service is not publicly funded, you would need to pay in the same way as you would if you were attending an in-person visit.

If my physiotherapist isn't in the room, who will help me and what types of care can be provided?

Depending on the setting and the circumstances, physiotherapists providing consultation or treatment via tele-rehabilitation may have assistance from other physiotherapists (for example where a physiotherapist with a specific clinical expertise is being consulted), by physiotherapy support workers, by other health care providers, or from your family members or friends. The physiotherapist is required to ensure that an appropriate level of support and assistance is available to address your needs and ensure your safety, and that you agree to the involvement of this assistance.

Examples of services that can be provided by tele-rehabilitation include, but are not limited to, consultation with local physiotherapists, education and instruction, monitoring your progress with a treatment program, and supervised exercise or meetings with your health care team.

What if I have a concern about the care?

If your physiotherapist is located in another province, they are required to be licensed in their home province or territory as well as the province or territory in which you receive the care. You may choose to raise your concerns with the regulator in either province or territory.