

Remote consultations during then COVID-19 pandemic- top tips from CSP members

Logistics

- Use Wi-Fi where possible for better connectivity
- If connectivity is poor, a phone call may be the best option
- Have a backup plan- make sure you have the patient's phone number in case of technical issues!
- Put your phone down! Remember, you may look small on your screen, but you're big on the patient's screen. Be wary of potential distractions because they will be noticeable
- Although the patient knows you're working from home, try to minimise distractions from pets, children, and other people in your household as much as possible. Try to depersonalise your background (e.g. limit pictures of holidays and family in the background)
- Ensure you and your patient have appropriate equipment for discussion and demonstration of movement and exercises as needed
- Allow plenty of time between appointments to allow for any tech issues during the consultation- this gives patients a real sense of value of their time with you
- Have a designated member of the team to lead the project, and be responsible for configuration, troubleshooting and giving extra support to those who may need it
- Provide training and give staff additional time during early implementation
- Ensure that you're aware of local emergency escalation pathways in the rare event that you need to use them
- Have self-management advice and exercise resources that may be used close to hand before the session starts. Resources to [help patients stay active and self-manage existing conditions](#) and [manage MSK conditions](#) are available on the CSP website.

Preparing patients

- Send patients information on how the consultation will work
- Offer choice on the platform used to put patients at ease
- Offer a free short pre-appointment video chat so patients can try out the virtual experience prior to booking
- Inform the patient that where possible any patient identifiable information shouldn't be shared, but encourage the patient to find a space to have confidential discussions

During the consultation

- Be extra vigilant on screening
- Very clear, succinct instruction is required when asking patients to perform an objective assessment without video connectivity
- Demonstrating movements, special tests and exercises makes a huge difference in the assessment
- Think about whether the patient will need to reach up and adjust equipment when exercising, and if this is safe
- Be aware that you may not be able to see all of the patients' body
- Ask your patient to wear contrasting socks to their trousers- this makes it easier to see what they are doing with their feet
- Maintain a professional appearance- wear your usual uniform and make sure the environment the patient can see looks as safe and welcoming as a treatment area

- Subject to patient consent, you may wish to record a video consultation and retain it in compliance with GDPR as part of the clinical record
- Regardless of method of session delivery, you should update digital or paper records and retain records of all patient consultations, adding them to the patient's medical records, where appropriate,

Ending the consultation

- Reinforce key learning points from the session and check that the patient understands them
- Inform the patient that you are going to close the consultation before you do it, as it can seem abrupt if no warning is given
- Give patients the opportunity to ask questions during the consultation. You may want to consider a one-off, time-limited opportunity to phone or email with additional questions after the appointment
- Ensure the patient has your contact details and is aware of the correct method to get in touch with further enquiries

Embracing digital tools

- Don't be afraid to try new things. Patients are willing to embrace a new way of working. Everybody's life is in an unprecedented state of change- this is an opportunity to embrace and try something new
- Embrace digital tools as another part of your physio toolkit
- Be aware of all the options that are available, both commercial and off-the-shelf products