

COVID-19: guide for rapid implementation of remote physiotherapy delivery

Top tips

- If there is no other alternative, you can use your own devices to deliver physiotherapy remotely and communicate with colleagues. Take reasonable steps to minimise risk:
 - Set a strong password
 - Use secure channels to communicate e.g. tools/apps that use encryption
 - Do not store personal/confidential patient information on the device unless absolutely necessary and appropriate security is in place
 - Check that your internet access is secure (e.g. use a Virtual Private Network, avoid public wi-fi) and use security features
 - Transfer information to the appropriate clinical record as soon as practically possible.⁽¹⁾
- Patients should be informed that the use of remote delivery methods is voluntary⁽²⁾; however, face-to-face physiotherapy may not be possible at this time based on your professional judgement. A patient's consent is implied by them accepting the invite and entering the consultation.⁽¹⁾
- In these circumstances, you can use mobile messaging to communicate with colleagues and patients if needed. Commercial apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram can be used where there is no practical alternative and the benefits outweigh the risk.⁽¹⁾
- Video consultations are securely encrypted, however, it is the patient's responsibility to ensure that they have adequate anti-spyware and anti-virus protection on their equipment/devices. If patients are using a mobile phone, they must be made aware that it can only be as secure as any other phone call on that mobile network.⁽²⁾
- Patients need to be made aware of any precautions required and potential risks of a remote delivery methods. Patients should also be informed that the consultation will not be digitally recorded without their prior consent but clinical outcomes will be recorded and stored on the patient record.⁽²⁾
- Remote physiotherapy delivery must be treated as any other face to face patient contact in which sensitive or confidential information is safeguarded at all times.^(1, 2) Take all possible steps to reduce any risks to patient confidentiality.^(1, 3)
 - Make patients aware if there are any other people in the room who may see them and/or hear the conversation. You must gain the patient's consent to conduct the appointment/conversation with other people present.⁽²⁾
 - Take reasonable steps to ensure privacy. Close the door, put a notices on the door and make staff aware that remote physiotherapy delivery is underway.⁽²⁾
 - Do not answer a call during a remote patient contact where possible.⁽²⁾ If a call is urgent, end the session and re-commence at a later time/date.
 - Follow your organisation's information security protocols regarding patient confidentiality.⁽²⁾

- Treat 'display name' and 'user name' in the same way as any other information you hold about a patient that could identify them- these should be stored securely and must not be disclosed to someone who does not have the right or need for the information.⁽²⁾
- Record remote physiotherapy delivery in the same way as you would for any other patient contact.⁽²⁾ Refer to HCPC and CSP standards.^(3, 4)
- Where possible, for patients who are less familiar with the technology you are using consider doing a test call to allow the patient to try it out and check that the video and audio works before the appointment start time.⁽⁵⁾
- Make patients aware that they should not use remote physiotherapy services as an emergency contact.⁽²⁾

Other related resources

Take a look at the [Physiotherapy Evidence Database \(PEDro\)](#) collation of evidence from systematic reviews to guide remote delivery of physiotherapy.

The University of Oxford have produced step by step [guidance on delivering video consultation in general practice](#) although this also may be applicable to other settings.

NHS England have developed [guidance on delivering remote consultations and other ways of remote working in secondary care](#).

Watch the Q Community's webinar: [Video consultation: how to set them up well, fast?](#)

Physio First, the professional network for physiotherapists working in private practice, have developed [guidance on how to connect with patients using virtual consultations](#).

For more information about digital tools available and how they can allow for remote delivery of physiotherapy services visit our [Digital Tools page](#).

References

1. NHSX. Information Governance. Available from: <https://www.nhsx.nhs.uk/key-information-and-tools/information-governance-guidance>
2. Barts Health NHS Trust. Guidelines for video consultations. Available from: <https://www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/download.cfm?doc=docm93jjm4n7611.pdf&ver=12217>
3. Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Information on providing online services. Available from: <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/registration/meeting-our-standards/information-on-providing-online-services/>
4. Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Record-keeping guidance. Available from: <https://www.csp.org.uk/publications/record-keeping-guidance>
5. Greenhalgh T, Shaw S, Wherton J, et al. Real-World Implementation of Video Outpatient Consultations at Macro, Meso, and Micro Levels: Mixed-Method Study. J Med Internet Res 2018;20(4):e150. Available from: [DOI: 10.2196/jmir.9897](https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.9897)