

Telehealth Counselling- FAQ for consumers



What is telehealth counselling?

This means accessing a mental health professional through phone or video options, which can be set up easily and securely through a landline, smartphone, PC, laptop, or tablet device.

Why is telehealth counselling being promoted?

As COVID-19 (coronavirus) cases increase across Australia and greater physical distancing measures are being employed, we are supporting our commissioned service providers, local GPs and allied health providers to help clients to access counselling through secure, non-face to face options. This will ensure that counselling services are not disrupted and remain available for our community members during this time.

An increasing number of people are needing to or choosing to self-isolate after encountering others who have or are suspected of having COVID-19. We want to make sure you can access counselling while we support Australia's strategies to reduce the impact of the virus. Providing telehealth options for counselling will help this happen and keep you and your clients safe.

Is telehealth counselling as effective as face-to-face?

Research has shown that telehealth counselling has similar clinical outcomes to face-to-face counselling, with people reporting a strong therapeutic relationship with their telehealth counsellor. In fact, many people reported that they preferred telehealth counselling because it:

- reduced the cost and time associated with travelling to counselling
- increased confidentiality, and
- could be accessed in the comfort and privacy of your home or chosen space.

Is telehealth counselling private and secure?

Mental health professionals and GPs may use a normal telephone for counselling or offer a videoconferencing option. These easily accessible options are encrypted which means that only the sender and receiver hold the code to unlock the content, ensuring your conversation is secure.

How will this work?

Mental health professionals and GPs will discuss options with you and can assist you in downloading or accessing the right platform / program for your phone or computer and can guide you through installation process.

At the appointment time, you will need to be in a quiet, private environment with no disruption from loud noises. If you are accessing counselling via the internet, you will need a good internet connection plus a webcam and microphone on your device. Your mental health professional can help you check that you have all the requirements. If you don't have the right equipment, you can work with mental health professional over the telephone.

Bear in mind that sometimes online technology might fail, which could be unsettling if it happens at a sensitive time in the session. In your first session, your mental health professional and you will plan what to do in the event of a technical glitch. Telehealth counselling is not always suitable if you are at risk of suicide or experiencing an acute crisis. Please talk to your mental health professional and GP if this relates to you.

Information about online support is also available on the [Head to Health](#) website.