

## mcp newsletter

May 1, 2020

20-05

**TO: ALL FEE-FOR-SERVICE PHYSICIANS**

**RE: REVISED PANDEMIC VIRTUAL CARE ASSESSMENT**

In consultation with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, the Department of Health and Community Services is introducing changes to the Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment fee code as highlighted below.

This temporary fee code is for direct patient care provided by physicians over the telephone or patient videoconferencing. This enables greater access for patients while abiding by the social distancing advisory and provides for a safer workplace for staff and physicians in health care clinics. This fee code is retroactive to March 18, 2020, which is the day the Public Health Emergency was declared. **Furthermore, the highlighted changes will also be retroactive to March 18, 2020.** The fee code will remain in effect until July 1, 2020 or whenever the Department of Health and Community Services deems pandemic health care delivery no longer necessary. This fee code is only available during the timeframe indicated, in order to adhere to public health measures. Use of the Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment fee code is not restricted to diagnoses specific to COVID-19.

For further clarity, Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments include both telephone services and videoconferencing. A Pandemic Virtual Care assessment (telephone or videoconferencing) is intended to provide an alternative to an in-office visit; as such, an office visit may not be claimed within 24 hours following a claimed virtual care assessment. However, where an in-person service is deemed medically necessary within 24 hours of a virtual care assessment, the medical practitioner should submit a claim to MCP for independent consideration with appropriate substantiating information as per section 4.3.1 of the Medical Payment Schedule.

It is recommended that physicians wishing to provide patient videoconferencing use the CISCO Jabber application, which is available to physicians at no cost through the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI). CISCO Jabber has been rigorously evaluated by NLCHI, and meets acceptable standards of privacy and security. NLCHI offers full **24/7** technical support and training for physicians using CISCO Jabber. Please see the Virtual Care: COVID-19 Guide below. This guide includes a link

to an intake form to sign up for virtual care using CISCO Jabber. Physicians using other videoconferencing platforms can also bill MCP for Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments. However, these solutions will not be supported by NLCHI. NLCHI can be contacted directly at info@telehealth.nlchi.nl.ca or 1-877-752-6006. Technical support can be reached at [virtualcaresupport@nlchi.nl.ca](mailto:virtualcaresupport@nlchi.nl.ca) or 1-866-459-8177.

Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments may only be claimed when the service is provided directly by the claiming physician and cannot be claimed for communications between health care providers. Both provider and patient may meet virtually in a physical location of their choosing as long as both the provider and patient are located within Newfoundland and Labrador. In-person visits are required when physical examination is necessary and cannot be adequately conducted using virtual means.

Patients cannot be charged for any aspect of a publicly-funded virtual care assessment.

50000 Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment (telephone or patient videoconferencing)  
 ..... \$42.00

**Notes:**

- 1) Record requirements:
  - a) documentation must meet the minimum requirements for a visit as stated in the MCP Medical Payment Schedule preamble section 4.2.2 with the exception of physical examination documentation.
  - b) the record of service must include the patient’s telephone number if contact is made by phone.
  - c) the record of service must contain the start and end time of the patient encounter.
  - d) patient consent for a Virtual Care Assessment is no longer required for MCP payment. However, physicians should familiarize themselves with direction provided by the Canadian Medical Protective Association (<https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/covid19> and <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2018/thinking-of-working-with-virtual-clinics---consider-these-medical-legal-issues>) and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador (<https://www.cpsnl.ca/web/files/2017-Mar-11%20-%20Telemedicine.pdf>).
- 2) Pandemic Virtual Care Assessments cannot be billed with any other service codes. No add-ons or premiums can be billed in addition to this fee code. There can be no overlapping services for this fee code or any other service billed by the physician.
- 3) Assessments requiring an in-person physical examination are not eligible for billing Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment.
- 4) This service cannot be delegated by the physician. It must be direct physician to patient contact in real time.
- 5) There is a maximum of one Patient Virtual Care Assessment per patient per day. If more than one virtual assessment is medically necessary, physicians should submit

records for independent consideration as per section 4.3.1 of the Medical Payment Schedule.

- 6) This fee is not payable for prescription renewals, notification of normal test results, notification of office, referral or other appointments, or other administrative tasks.
- 7) This fee is not payable to physicians who are working under salary, service contract, APP or sessional arrangements. However, physicians billing fee code 611010 for Category 'B' services may also bill the Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment code **if the physician is on-site** at the Category 'B' service site. Physicians billing codes 611010 and 50000 should indicate on the individual medical records for fee code 50000 that they are present on-site at the Category 'B' Emergency Department or pandemic assessment clinic.
- 8) There is a daily limit of 40 units of virtual care assessments per physician per day. Physicians billing this fee code in excess of this amount will have the billings recovered.

Questions relating to the content of this Newsletter should be directed Dr. Colleen Crowther, Assistant Medical Director at (709) 758-1557 or by email at [colleencrowther@gov.nl.ca](mailto:colleencrowther@gov.nl.ca)

# VIRTUAL CARE: COVID-19 GUIDE

## Expanding Private and Secure Virtual Care Across NL

Virtual care enables access to services and promotes patient and provider safety while social distancing efforts are underway. Virtual care options are available to health care providers in the Regional Health Authorities and those in community practice

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PROVIDERS?



To sign up for virtual care using CISCO Jabber, please [click here](#) to complete and submit the intake form.



When the form is submitted, someone from the program will contact you to help set up the CISCO Jabber software and ensure that you are ready to offer virtual appointments.



Virtual appointments are eligible for payment through MCP if you are a fee-for-service physician.



Training and education materials are available [here](#).



Health care providers should have an initial conversation with the patient to confirm virtual care is appropriate. Click [here](#) for more details on this process and information about patient consent.



## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PATIENTS?



There is no cost to the patient for virtual appointments, as long as they have a valid MCP.



Patients will require a personal email address and access to a device (computer, tablet, or mobile phone) with a camera, speaker, and internet connection. Patients can test their device, browser and internet connection [here](#).



Patients will receive an email invitation (with unique appointment link) when an appointment is scheduled.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Provincial Telehealth Program

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's COVID-19 website