



Appendix D: Advice for the Profession Virtual Care

The following is provided for members to use as a resource in addition to appropriate clinical judgment on making decisions when providing virtual care to their patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Appropriate clinical judgement allows practitioners to care for patients as safely and responsibly as possible.

To consider during the provision of virtual care

-  Security of electronic devices and communication involving patient information
-  The technical capabilities of your patients







Privacy

As a requirement of the [Health Information Act](#), a health custodian must take reasonable steps to maintain administrative, technical and physical safeguards to protect individuals' health information.

There is also a requirement to notify the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner if you are implementing new administrative practices such as virtual or remote care. Although this type of service allows for social distancing and decreasing the risk of transmission of COVID-19, the provider is still responsible for the protection of the individual's health information.



Virtual Considerations

Denturists must continue to maintain the privacy and reasonably continue to provide the level of service of any virtual patient consultations as they would in an in-person office visit. In this, consider:

-  A private space where your conversation or video conference is not overheard or seen by others
-  How patients will contact you and scheduling of these appointments
-  What to do in an emergency situation should one arise
-  Maintenance of the privacy of any portion of the patient record that is created outside your office or clinic environment
-  Discussion with the patient about the technology being used and risks involved
-  Unless you are registered in another province as a dentist, and that provincial regulatory College authorizes virtual care, you are not permitted to provide virtual care outside of patients residing in Alberta

Consent

When using unregulated platforms, it is recommended that expressed patient consent is obtained. This is achieved by:

-  Carefully establishing and confirming that the identity of the patient is correct
-  Explaining to the patient at the start of the virtual encounter that:

“Unregulated virtual care technologies increase the risk that your personal health information maybe intercepted or disclosed to third parties. These tools are being used as an extraordinary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic when regulated technology is not readily available, and the necessity to keep people from congregating or attending health facilities where they may be exposed to the

COVID-19 virus is thought to outweigh the risk of personal privacy breaches on both a personal and population health basis.”








The College advises the denturist to consult with their own legal counsel as to their use of virtual care and any public advisories that are required.

Documentation

As with all in office visits, virtual visits must be appropriately documented and included in the patient chart. Any consent that is attained, would be included in the visit documentation and patient chart.



What can Denturists do?

Patient care

-  Determining overall treatment plan (order of treatment)
-  Immediate denture consults (complete vs partial denture)
-  Discussion of ongoing issues (i.e., can the denture be repaired, does it require an impression, implant issues)
-  Consult implants (screw retained vs. removable)
-  Reline consult vs new start checking occlusal wear and patient's occluding bite
-  Discussion of pain management strategies
-  Referral to alternate healthcare provider

Technical guidance

In a time of pandemic, this may be emphasized

-  Assisting with self-adjustment of denture
-  Denture care

Virtual Care Tools

Virtual care is enabled by digital technology that permits the communication of health information across locations. Although work is underway to deploy secure tools in Alberta which allows a secure platform for transmission of patient information, the timeframe of a pandemic does not allow for this. That being said, options are available.

Some platforms offer regulated health-specific solutions which are privacy and security compliant while others are unregulated and do not provide health system-level privacy and security compliance. In these unprecedented times, the College does recognize that short-term use of unregulated virtual care technology can be justified to address urgent patient care issues. If an unregulated platform is utilized, the use of encrypted applications is preferred.

To assist in the evaluation of unregulated platforms, please click [here](#).

Billing for Virtual Services

If you intend to bill for the provided service, you must discuss this with your patient and document in the patient's record.

The Denturist Association of Canada (DAC) has a code for billing of these virtual services. DAC's Masterlist of Procedure Codes has a procedure code for a Professional Consultation (70050) whereby the definition is



“a professional consultation with a patient, potential patient, member of the profession or other health care providers in or out of the office whether in person or by electronic means”,

as defined in the DAC's Succinct Glossary of Terms and Procedures. The DAC and College feel that this is the appropriate procedure code that would duly represent the services that are being provided to a patient by way of electronic means. This procedure code is already readily available in all DAC 2020 Provincial Association Fee Guides.

Resources

[College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta COVID-19: Virtual Care \(Advice to the Profession\)](#)

[Denturist Association of Canada Fee Guides](#)

[Doctors of BC Virtual Care Toolkit](#)

[College of Alberta Denturists Standards of Practice – Patient Record Keeping](#)