

What are telemedicine and telehealth?

Vermont law says, in [8 V.S.A. § 4100k](#):

"**Telemedicine**" means the delivery of health care services, including dental services, such as diagnosis, consultation, or treatment through the use of **live interactive audio and video** over a secure connection that complies with the requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-191.

[Medicaid.gov](#) says:

For purposes of Medicaid, **telemedicine** seeks to improve a patient's health by permitting two-way, real time interactive communication between the patient, and the physician or practitioner at the distant site. This electronic communication means the use of **interactive telecommunications equipment that includes, at a minimum, audio and video equipment**. Telemedicine is viewed as a cost-effective alternative to the more traditional face-to-face way of providing medical care (e.g., face-to-face consultations or examinations between provider and patient) that states can choose to cover under Medicaid. **This definition is modeled on Medicare's definition of telehealth services** ([42 CFR 410.78](#)). Note that the federal Medicaid statute does not recognize telemedicine as a distinct service.

[Telehealth.hhs.gov](#) says:

Telehealth includes video visits, phone calls, online communication, and storing patient data. Your practice may provide telehealth services using **email or sharing lab results in a secure patient portal**. [Potential uses of telehealth](#) extend beyond COVID-19 services.

[Asynchronous telehealth](#) is communication between providers, patients, and caregivers stored for future reference or response. Examples include:

- E-mail or text messages with follow-up instructions or confirmations
- Images for evaluation
- Lab results or vital statistics

[Synchronous care](#) is a 'real-time' interaction for patient health communication. Patients can have caregivers or in-home nursing present to assist the remote physician. Examples include:

- Video calls to share progress or check on healing
- Audio only calls to confirm instructions
- Text messaging to answer patient questions

Remote patient monitoring consists of transmitting and storing patient data and clinical measurements from in-home devices to patient portals. This data transmission may be either asynchronous or support synchronous provider visits. Examples include data from:

- Blood pressure monitors
- Pacemakers
- Glucose meters
- Oximeters

mHealth is an evolving area where digital applications on smartphones can support patients between provider visits. Smartphones and third-party apps can assist with:

- Remote patient monitoring
- Push notifications reminding patients to follow treatment plans
- Storing detailed instructions or education materials

NIH National Library of Medicine [MedlinePlus](#) says:

Telehealth is using electronic communications to provide or get health care services. You can get health care using phones, computers, or mobile devices. **You can find health information or talk with your health care provider using streaming media, video chats, email, or text messages. Your provider can use telehealth to remotely monitor your health with devices that can remotely record vital signs (for example, blood pressure, weight, and heart rate), medicine intake, and other health information. Your provider can also communicate with other providers using telehealth.**

Telehealth is also called telemedicine.

Here are just a few ways telehealth is used.

- **E-mail** – you can use email to ask your provider questions or order prescription refills. If you get a test done, the results can be sent to your providers by email. Or, one provider can share and discuss results with another provider or a specialist.
- **Live telephone conferencing** – you can make an appointment to talk to your provider on the phone or join phone-based online support groups
- **Live video conferencing** – you can make an appointment and use video chat to talk to your provider or join online support groups.
- **Mhealth (mobile health)** – you can use a mobile device to talk with or text your provider. You can use health apps to track things like your blood sugar levels or diet and exercise results and share it with your providers. You can receive text or email reminders for appointments.
- **Remote patient monitoring** – this allows your provider to monitor your health from afar. You keep devices to measure your heart rate, blood pressure, or blood glucose in your home. These devices collect data and send it to your provider to monitor your health.
- **Online health information** – you can watch videos to learn specific skills to help you manage health conditions like diabetes or asthma. You can also read health information online to help you make informed decisions about your care with your provider.

The [American Medical Association \(AMA\)](#) says:

While **telemedicine** has historically referred to as **remote clinical services**, **telehealth can refer to a broader array of services using both synchronous and asynchronous technologies**, including:

- Real-time, audio-video visits.
- Store-and-forward technologies.
- Online digital visits and/or brief check-in services, including verbal/audio-only check-ins.
- Inter-professional internet consultations.
- Remote patient-monitoring.

