

Emerging Minds Families

FACT SHEET

Talking to your child about telehealth

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Definition

Emerging Minds acknowledges that families come in many forms. For the purposes of easy reading, the term 'parent' encompasses the biological, adoptive, foster and kinship carers of a child, as well as individuals who have chosen to take up primary or shared responsibility in raising that child. We also appreciate that every child is unique and has different strengths and experiences that shape their health and development.



Every family experiences ups and downs as they go through daily life. During more difficult times, professionals such as your general practitioner (GP) can provide valuable support and guidance for you and your child.

It's helpful to prepare your child for any interactions they might have with a professional, especially when it comes to topics that can be sensitive, like their mental health and overall wellbeing. This includes talking about what to expect if your appointment is going to take place via telehealth.

Here are eight things you can do to support children in the leadup to a telehealth appointment:

1. Explain to your child that they will be talking to the professional through a device, such as a phone, iPad, laptop or desktop computer. You can also explain to your child what that experience might look like – for example, letting them know that you and the professional will be able to hear and see each other.
2. Let your child know if you'll be present or not during the session. If appropriate, you could ask whether they'd like you to be present for the whole session, some of the session, or not at all.
3. Explain that it's important they don't play with the device during the telehealth session, such as opening other apps or games, or closing the video call application.
4. Set up and test out the space that they'll be using for the telehealth session. Talk to your child about where they'll be sitting and where the device will be placed. Open a camera app and check that your child is clearly visible in the frame. If possible, try recording some audio as well to check that it sounds clear; if you're unsure how, a quick Google search can help. Your child may need coaching to stay within the video frame and speak towards the microphone of the device.
5. Explain what your child should do if some aspect of the technology doesn't seem to be working well (for example, if they can't hear or see the professional properly). This might include how they can get your attention to help troubleshoot the problem.

6. Let your child know how long you expect the session to go for.
7. Ask your child if they have any questions about the telehealth session and provide space for them to think and answer.
8. Write a list of questions you and your child might have for the professional before your telehealth time, so you can easily remember to cover everything during the appointment.

Conversation starters

Here are some ideas for talking to your child about telehealth:

- 'Today, we get to talk to Dr Mandy on the computer. We can see her and chat with her. Is there anything you want to ask me or talk about before we meet her online?'
- 'Remember when we met Rahul at the clinic? Today, we'll talk to him on the iPad. Do you want me to be here with you, or would you like some time to chat with him on your own when you're comfortable?'
- 'Instead of going to Louise's clinic, we'll talk to her on the iPad. Where do you think is the best place in the house for us to set up?'
- 'OK, everything's ready for our telehealth session. I'll say hello to Tom, then I'll be downstairs working. Just call me if you need help or if Tom's video or sound isn't clear.'
- 'Today, we'll chat with Anika on the computer for about 30 minutes. Is there something you'd like to have with you to feel comfortable and help you focus?'
- 'I think it'll be really fun talking to Sandra on the iPad today, don't you? Now, I know we normally like to play games on the iPad, but today we'll just be talking and listening. Try to remember not to press the buttons on the screen unless I say so. Don't worry, I'll remind you if you forget.'

These tips can help you and your child to make the most of your telehealth sessions, ensuring you receive the support you need to navigate life's ups and downs.

Check out our other fact sheets for simple strategies you and your child can use to make the most out of your telehealth appointments.

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Emerging Minds leads the National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health (NWC). The NWC is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program.

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