

# Telehealth in Physiotherapy

## What is it?

In response to the evolving COVID-19 situation, here at Queensland Physiotherapy we are provisioning alternate methods of physiotherapy service delivery including telehealth services.

Telehealth refers to any health service that is delivered without a person being seen in-person, including phone calls, video calls, instant messaging and more. Many people living in rural areas of Australia have extreme difficulty in accessing appropriate healthcare services and, in response to this, Australia has become a leading example of implementing telehealth solutions - including for physiotherapy services.



**“The extension of telehealth services makes sense – both because it allows us to keep caring for people, and because it lessens the risk of exposure.”**

*Australian Physiotherapy Association*

**“Our workforce is skilled in providing services via telehealth to people experiencing barriers to accessing health services. This has worked successfully for several years; we know that it is both safe and effective.”**

*Australian Physiotherapy Association*

## Who is suitable for this service?

Various studies have shown that telerehabilitation is considered to be a viable option for the clinical management of a range of conditions. These include, but are not limited to;

- Acute musculoskeletal conditions (i.e. ankle sprains, muscle tears)
- Chronic musculoskeletal conditions (i.e. osteoarthritis, low back pain)
- Pelvic floor training (i.e. antenatal, post-partum, post-surgery)
- Cardiac rehabilitation (i.e. post-operative, reduced exercise tolerance)
- Respiratory (i.e. COPD, pneumonia)
- Pre/post orthopaedic rehabilitation (i.e. total hip replacement, ACL repair)

To determine if you'd be suitable for this service, we are offering a FREE initial telephone consult - just call us on 3325 1858 to find out more!

## How effective is telehealth?

There is significant research comparing face-to-face versus telehealth physiotherapy, which indicates that TeleHealth outcomes are comparable or, in some cases, more effective for diagnosing and treating conditions.

One study from 2017 by Cottrell et al evaluated the effectiveness of treatment delivered via real-time telerehabilitation consults for the management of musculoskeletal conditions in adults compared to conventional methods of delivery (face-to-face). Results from this study suggest that telerehabilitation is **effective in the improvement of physical function, whilst being slightly more favorable than the control cohort following intervention**. For the improvement of function, treatment delivered solely via telerehabilitation is equivalent to face-to-face intervention and is comparable for the improvement of pain. However, the study concluded that the ideal treatment for pain relief combined usual care face-to-face with telerehabilitation.

Another study by Moffet et al in 2015 drew similar conclusions in a more specific population. In this study, 205 patients post- total knee arthroplasty were randomly assigned before hospital discharge to the telerehabilitation group or the face-to-face home visit group for two months, with both groups receiving the same intervention for rehabilitation. At the last follow-up, the mean **differences between the groups with respect to the osteoarthritis questionnaire were close to zero and slightly in favor of the telehealth group**. Similar results were obtained for the functional status and quality of life secondary outcomes, supporting the use of telehealth as an effective alternative to face-to-face service in patients post-total knee arthroplasty.

Cottrell, M. A., Galea, O. A., O'Leary, S. P., Hill, A. J., & Russell, T. G. (2017). Real-time telerehabilitation for the treatment of musculoskeletal conditions is effective and comparable to standard practice: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical rehabilitation*, 31(5), 625-638.

Moffet, H., Tousignant, M., Nadeau, S., Mérette, C., Boissy, P., Corriveau, H., ... & Dimentberg, R. (2015). In-home telerehabilitation compared with face-to-face rehabilitation after total knee arthroplasty: a noninferiority randomized controlled trial. *JBJS*, 97(14), 1129-1141.

## FAQ's

### Q: How do I book an appointment?

**A:** Once we have determined your suitability for this service from your FREE initial telephone consultation, we will prompt you to organize a time that suits you.

### Q: What do I wear?

**A:** Something comfortable that you can exercise and move around in if required. Please ensure the clothing is appropriate for the body region being treated so that adequate exposure to that area can be achieved. For example, shorts for a knee condition or singlet for a shoulder condition.

### Q: What technology platform are you using?

**A:** One of the Queensland Physiotherapy practitioners will email you a secure log-in link to access your online video consult via Zoom. For convenience, this is accessible on various devices including smart devices, laptops and computers. Video recording of the session is optional, but your therapist will always gain your consent before recording a session.

### Q: How do I pay for the appointment?

**A:** Due to the nature of this service, we will require full payment prior to the initial video session. We will provide you with a secure payment platform during the initial telephone consultation.

According to the latest update from the APA, private health insurers will offer rebates for telehealth physio after 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2020. WorkCover QLD and NDIS both fund telehealth physio sessions, but Department of Veteran's Affairs does not. Medicare do not yet offer any rebates but we will provide prompt updates when available.

### Q: Will I need a follow-up consultation?

**A:** Your physiotherapist may request one or more follow-up appointments depending on your condition. They may also prescribe you exercises via TeleHab to allow them to monitor and track your progress.

**Queensland Physiotherapy Pty Ltd**  
23/5-15 Jagora Drive  
Albany Creek  
Queensland 4035  
ABN 35 155 893 603

**T** (07) 3325 1858  
**F** (07) 3325 4760  
**E** [reception@qldphysio.com.au](mailto:reception@qldphysio.com.au)  
**W** [www.qldphysio.com.au](http://www.qldphysio.com.au)