

## TELEHEALTH SUPPORT FOR ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE

How telehealth appointments can help you or a loved one access support and treatment for alcohol and other drug use (such as crystal methamphetamine use).



### WHAT IS TELEHEALTH?

Telehealth involves using technology to conduct health consultations virtually rather than face-to-face. Telehealth appointments can be conducted via video chat, or over the phone. They can be incredibly beneficial and convenient, depending on a person's circumstances. Telehealth appointments are also safe, secure and can be helpful for those who need it.

### HOW CAN TELEHEALTH BENEFIT YOU OR A LOVED ONE?



Telehealth appointments can be more convenient, as they can be accessed anywhere there is phone reception and/or internet access



Reduced travel time to appointments, making treatment easier to access particularly in rural/remote areas



Attending appointments in a safe space, such as at home, may help reduce nerves or anxiety



The flexible nature of virtual appointments means there may be more time for treatment, or the option of shorter check-ins, if appropriate

### WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?



Lack of access to required technology, phone reception or reliable internet



Difficulty finding a quiet space, free of distractions



Inconvenience of not being able to automatically claim certain types of appointments through Medicare



Financial costs associated with treatment



Preference for face-to-face or group options

## HOW DOES TELEHEALTH WORK FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED SUPPORT OR TREATMENT FOR ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUG USE (E.G. CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE USE)?

If a person chooses to pursue telehealth consultations to access help for alcohol or other drug use, they will likely receive counselling (individual or group), help managing withdrawal symptoms, harm-minimisation information (tips on how to stay safe when using drugs), as well as ongoing check-ups and advice from specialists. They may also receive referrals to other specialists or relevant treatments.

**Cracks in the Ice** provides a **list of phone counselling support lines** that offer support, information and referrals.

**Family Drug Support** also provides support for people who are concerned about a loved one's use of alcohol or other drugs. Help is available via online counselling and a 24-hour hotline (1300 368 186).

## TIPS FOR A TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENT



If you have a usual health service provider, it is a good idea to have a look at their website, or contact them directly to see if they offer telehealth services



Don't be afraid to ask what treatment will involve, and how it might differ from face-to-face treatment



Try to find a quiet space in your home, and make sure others know not to come into the room during appointments if they are at home at the same time



Put your phone on silent mode or turn it off, to eliminate distractions



If it is your loved one who is having a telehealth appointment, check in with them to see if they need anything from you, and provide support the same way you would if they were attending face-to-face treatment



Have a pen and paper handy to jot down notes if needed

## REFERENCES:

- Seabrook, E., Little, G., Foley, F., Nedeljkovic, M., & Thomas, N. (2020). A Practical Guide to Video Mental Health Consultation. Melbourne, Australia: Swinburne University of Technology.
- HealthVitalIT. (2019). Using telehealth for remote consultations. Retrieved from:  
<https://healthvitalit.com.au/topics/article/digital-health/using-telehealth-remote-consultations>
- St Vincent's Hospital Sydney. (2020). Alcohol & Drug Service. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.svhs.org.au/our-services/list-of-services/alcohol-and-drug-service>
- Saurman, E., Perkins, D., Roberts, R., Roberts, A., Patfield, M., & Lyle, D. (2011). Responding to Mental Health Emergencies: Implementation of an Innovative Telehealth Service in Rural and Remote New South Wales, Australia. *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, 37(5), 453-459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jen.2010.11.005>
- Salifu, Y. & Michael Erdiaw, K. (2019). Rurality, Alcohol Consumption and Telehealth: Laying the Foundation for Scoping Review. *Trends Telemed E-Health* 2(1). TTEH.000529.2019.