



## VIRTUAL VISITS – A PATIENT GUIDE

### **Q: What is SportsMED CONNECT?**

A: SportsMED CONNECT is a service we offer that allows for virtual visits between our patients and their care teams.

### **Q: What are virtual visits?**

A: Virtual visits are face-to-face telemedicine video encounters between healthcare providers and patients that don't require a trip to the office. Think of it as a "Facetime" encounter with your healthcare provider without the travel and wait time. Visits can be done in a fraction of the time and at no added cost to most patients.

### **Q: Why should we use a virtual visit instead of just coming into the office?**

A: Virtual visits enable timely, convenient and regular follow-up with your surgeon, while respecting social distancing precautions. This is a matter of patient preference, but the vast majority of office visits entail a quick check up by the physician, discussion of a care plan and follow up instructions. They can be done in the comfort and convenience of home, and at no extra cost to you if you have recently had surgery.

### **Q: I want to see the doctor, but I am worried about the risk of COVID exposure. Is a virtual visit a better option for me?**

A: A virtual visit is an ideal option to stay connected with your care team while maintaining social distancing. Our practice has gone to great lengths to ensure patient protection and safety during the pandemic. Rest assured if you wish to come to the office, we have taken precautions to enhance the safety of our patients.

**Q: I have tested positive for COVID and have an orthopedic issue. Am I still a candidate for a virtual visit?**

A: We request patients who have tested positive for COVID, with or without symptoms, to maintain appropriate quarantine guidelines and refrain from coming to our offices for an appointment. A virtual visit is an ideal option in this setting.

**Q: What sorts of health conditions can be addressed using SportsMED CONNECT?**

A: Our system is focused on managing patients being seen for select neurosurgical, orthopedic and spine conditions; primarily for patients who have had a surgical procedure or need a routine follow-up office visit. **(SportsMED CONNECT is NOT for evaluating or treating a life threatening or emergent condition.)**

**Q: I recently had an imaging study and want to review this with my physician. Can I do this through a virtual visit?**

: Absolutely. We have found a virtual visit to be an efficient way to discuss imaging study results as well as plan next steps of care.

**Q: Can family members participate in these virtual visits?**

A: Yes. We have designed the system to allow your loved ones to participate in these visits, without having to travel to our office. We are also designing a feature where they can participate regardless of their location.

**Q: What equipment is needed for the virtual visit?**

A: You can use any mobile phone, tablet or computer with a camera and web browser that can also receive text messages. (We recommend using a secured Wi-Fi connection as well.) There is no app to download. Most patients use their smart phone.

**Q: How do we schedule a virtual visit?**

A: Patients who elect the option of virtual visits are asked to sign a consent form and are enrolled by members of your physician's care team. Once scheduled, you will be sent a text message reminder for the appointment. At the time of your appointment, you will receive another text message with a link. Just click the link and you will be connected with your care team.

**Q: How do I prepare for my virtual visit?**

We recommend you find a quiet room and place your phone/tablet on a stand. Make sure your phone is on a secure wi-fi network. Once you hit the link, you may be asked to grant access to your camera and microphone for the encounter. Press "Yes" for both.

**Q: How long will these virtual visits take to complete?**

A: New patient visits can last 30 minutes. Follow-up appointments may take 10-15 minutes. Reviewing X rays, MRI scans or other imaging may take 5-15 minutes. We view these virtual visits as a check-up for most patients. We value your time and your health. (We also know you have better things to do with your day than sit and wait in your doctor's office for a routine check-up.)

**Q: Can I get medications prescribed during these virtual visits?**

A: Yes. We will be able to fill most non-narcotic prescriptions via e-prescription. Narcotics/controlled substance, if prescribed, will still require written prescriptions that would be picked up from a SportsMED location.

**Q: What if I still want to be seen in-person at the office?**

A: This option can be requested by you or your care team at any time. Signing up for a virtual visit doesn't preclude being seen in person.

**Q: Is there a cost for doing a virtual visit?**

A: There is no associated cost for post-operative patients within 90 days of their surgery, most patients with Medicare of BCBS- Alabama. (Starting March 2020, Medicare and BCBS of Alabama have changed their policies on telemedicine reimbursement, to enable more patients to have virtual visits in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak.)

**Q: Are these virtual visits secure?**

A: Yes. The system is encrypted, HIPAA compliant and designed to insure the privacy of your health information.

**Q: Will I be seen my care team or by an outside group of providers?**

A: You will be seen and evaluated by members of your care team at SportsMED.

**Q: Will these encounters be recorded and saved?**

A: The encounters will not be recorded or archived. Your care team will still document the findings in your health record.

**Q: How many telemedicine visits can I have?**

A: We limit the number of telemedicine visits to no more frequently than one every 2 weeks. Post-operative patients within 90 days of surgery may be given the option of checking in more frequently for items like wound checks.