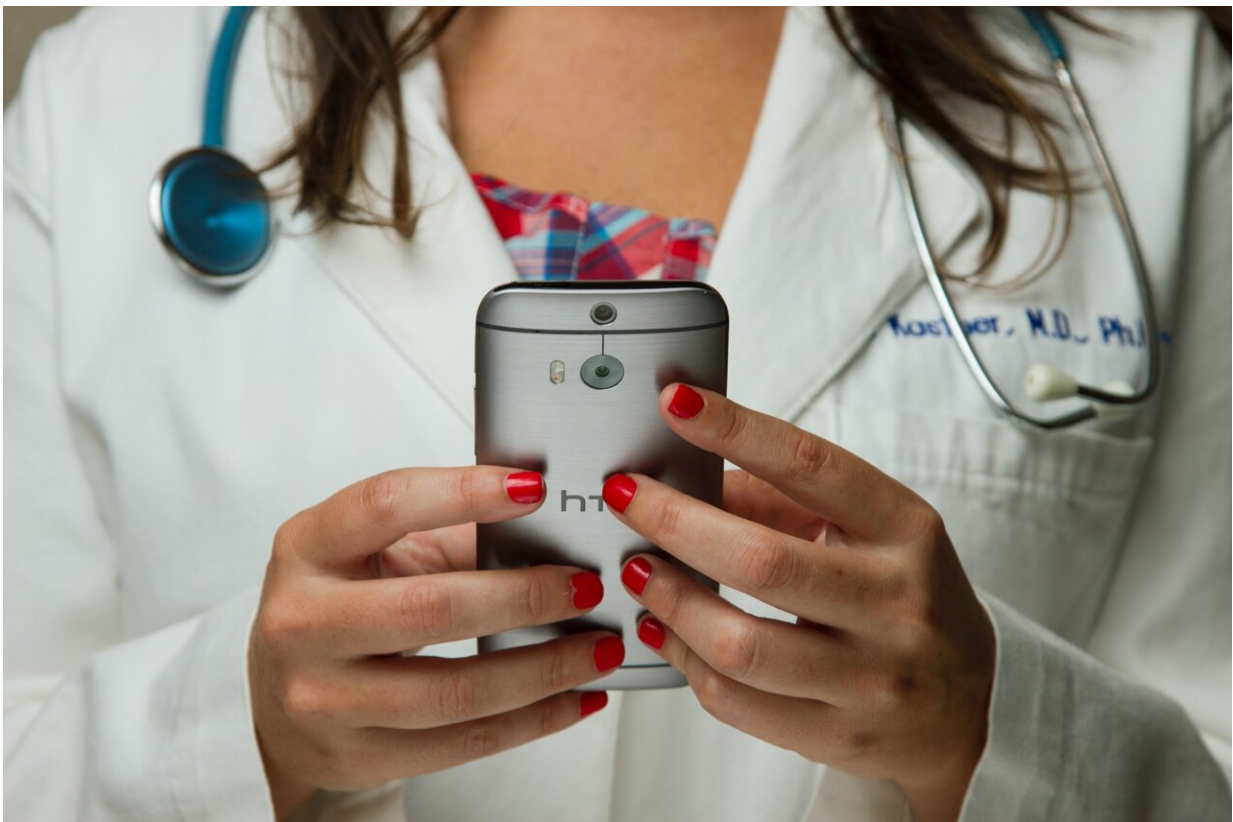


# Ask the pediatrician: How can parents of children with autism prepare for telehealth appointments?

June 20 2022, by Dr. Kristin Sohl

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Q: How can I help my daughter, who has autism, prepare for a telehealth appointment?

A: Telehealth visits can be a helpful part of your child's ongoing medical care. Because regular visits and therapy may require time away from work and school, using a video or [phone call](#) can be a beneficial, convenient and fun way to check in from almost anywhere.

But keep in mind that just as it can be hard for some children to sit in a doctor's office for a visit, it can be even harder to sit through a telehealth appointment and talk. Preparing for the visit ahead of time can make it easier for your child to participate and help the visit go smoothly.

Telehealth visits allow your child to take part in all or part of the visit while they play or relax. Talk with your pediatrician about which parts of the visit they would like your child to participate in and when your child can take breaks. Share tips with the pediatrician about ways to communicate with your child that you've found work well.

Some tips to help prepare your child for a telehealth visit:

- Let them have a favorite toy, stuffed animal, book, pictures, activity or other item to show their doctor.
- Show your child what to expect beforehand. Seeing the doctor via telehealth still is new for many and having an idea about what will happen can be helpful.
- Tell them that they will see their doctor on the computer or phone screen.
- Point out that they can talk and show things to the doctor just like in person.
- Try using tools like social stories or visual schedules with pictures or simple first/then boards to help your child know what to expect with a telehealth visit. Ask your doctor if they have these or other tools.
- If possible, practice logging on to the telehealth program before your appointment to make sure it works. Staff in the

pediatrician's office may also be available to do this with you.

Some other ways to get ready:

- Double-check your equipment including the camera, microphone and [internet connection](#) so they are working and ready when it's time for the appointment.
- If you or your child need accommodations, call the pediatrician's office to request an interpreter service or communication assistance.
- Think ahead about where you want to be with your child for the appointment so you are comfortable sharing [medical information](#) with the doctor in that environment.
- Please be safe. Do not drive during a telehealth appointment. If you are in the car, make sure the car is parked and you can safely talk to the doctor.
- Be sure to make notes of stories or examples of your child's progress to share and have your questions ready.
- Connect with your child's medical home team or their specialists. It's best when you and your child see the same doctor on a regular basis who knows your child and is familiar with their needs.

Regular visits to the doctor are important for [children](#) with [autism spectrum disorder](#). Checking in on important topics like school, friends, progress toward goals, and medical and behavioral concerns need to happen frequently. These visits help you, your child and your pediatrician make decisions together. They help build a trusting partnership to guide your child toward their best health.

It's important to talk with your [pediatrician](#) about how you and your child like to be seen for medical care. This will help you decide when the right time is for an in-person visit or a [telehealth](#) visit.

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