

# Telehealth may help people stick with alcoholism treatment

April 1 2024, by Dennis Thompson

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Telehealth might be a more effective way of treating alcoholism than in-

person therapy sessions, a new study reports.

Alcoholics who receive [treatment](#) through telehealth were more likely to engage in more therapy visits and stick to anti-alcohol medication longer than those who venture out for alcohol use disorder therapy, researchers found.

The new study was [published](#) recently in the journal *Alcohol, Clinical and Experimental Research*.

These results are "particularly important in the current context, as the United States debates whether to sustain or revoke pandemic-era policies that decreased barriers to telehealth," concluded the research team led by Dr. Ponni Perumalswami, of the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System.

For the study, researchers analyzed data from the Veterans Administration gathered during the pandemic, from March 2020 to February 2021, on more than 138,000 [patients](#) diagnosed with alcohol use disorder.

During the study period, 53% of patients had at least one video visit, 38% had at least one telephone visit but no video visits, and 9% had only in-person visits, researchers said.

Telehealth was associated with more therapy visits and medication use compared with in-person visits, researchers found.

What's more, among those who received treatment through telehealth, video visits prompted significantly more [therapy sessions](#) than telephone visits.

Black patients were less likely to receive video telehealth treatment and were more likely to have in-person visits, highlighting "important

disparities in [alcohol](#) use disorder telehealth use," researchers said.

**More information:** Ponni V. Perumalswami et al, Telehealth and delivery of alcohol use disorder treatment in the Veterans Health Administration, *Alcohol, Clinical and Experimental Research* (2024). DOI: [10.1111/acer.15305](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.15305)

The Cleveland Clinic has more about [alcohol use disorder](#).

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