

*Mar 23 – Letter to Patients Re: Virtual Care*

*COVID-19 is placing stress on Canada's public health system. Our Family Health Team (FHT) is now offering virtual care (video/audio technologies) to make sure we can continue to care for patients safely and effectively. This means we may offer virtual care for many patient visits rather than asking you to come into one of our offices. The video technologies we will be using are Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) or Zoom both of which are PHIPA (Personal Health Information Privacy Act) compliant. Virtual care will help make discussions with your care provider easier during these difficult times. Some health concerns can be addressed with virtual care alone, but in some cases our doctors/nurse practitioners may ask you to visit one of our FHT offices or a hospital for a physical examination.*

*We will do our best to make sure that any information you give to us during virtual care visits is private and secure, but no virtual care is ever completely secure. There is an increased security risk that your health information may be intercepted or disclosed to third parties when using virtual care tools. To help us keep your information safe and secure, you can:*

- Understand that emails, calls, or texts you receive are not secure in the same way as a private appointment in an exam room.*
- Use a private computer/device (i.e., not an employer's or third party's computer/device), secure accounts, and a secure internet connection. For example, using a personal and encrypted email account is more secure than an unencrypted email account, and your access to the Internet on your home network will generally be more secure than an open guest Wi-Fi connection.*

*You should also understand that electronic communication is not a substitute for in-person communication or clinical examinations, where appropriate, or for attending the Emergency Department when needed (including for any urgent care that may be required).*

*If you are concerned about using video or audio tools for virtual care, you can ask our office to arrange for you to visit a FHT office where you can be seen in person. However, please note that visiting a FHT office in person comes with a higher risk of coming into contact with COVID-19 and the possibility of spreading the virus.*

*We will be asking you to agree to let us collect, use, or disclose your personal health information through video or audio communications (while following applicable privacy laws) in order to provide you with care.*