

Hamilton Family Health Team

Green Initiative

Virtual Care



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Virtual Care is any interaction, synchronous (at the same time) or asynchronous (at different times), with a patient without in-person contact using any form of communication or information technology. Some examples are:



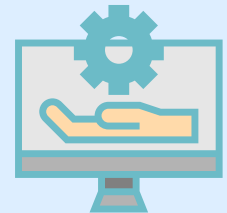
phone calls



video visits



emails



software
support



home
monitoring



apps



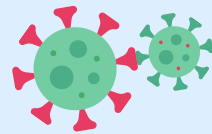
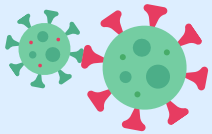
messaging

Prior to the pandemic only 10-20% of primary care visits were held virtually in Canada.²

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The **COVID pandemic** has spurred a healthcare revolution in Canada, forcing a massive shift away from in-person interactions towards virtual care. With over **70% of ambulatory care** across the country during June 2020, represented by virtual care.¹



Enabling virtual care options will help us:

1. Offer better health care

2. Reduce health care carbon footprint

1 Virtual care enables us to provide better care

- Leads to better health care outcomes, reduce wait times and increase referral speed³
- Greatly reduces infection risk¹
- Reduces healthcare costs¹
- Creates health system capacity with increased access to primary care^{1, 2}
- Reduces barriers such as taking time off work, saving costs and time for patients⁵
- Bridges the gap in healthcare for those who are geographically or culturally isolated^{3, 6}
- Improves patient empowerment and ability to manage their own chronic diseases^{7, 8, 9}



Studies Show Patients like the Option of Virtual Care

Through the COVID pandemic, **91% of Canadians** polled who had a virtual visit with their doctor said they were satisfied with the experience.¹



61% of Canadians polled indicated a 10/10 likelihood they would recommend virtual visits to a friend or family member.¹⁰



Asynchronous messaging comprises up to 90% of virtual visits in some contexts, primarily due to the convenience of being able to respond whenever and wherever.¹⁰



Patients are very satisfied with virtual visits and do not overuse them.¹⁰



2

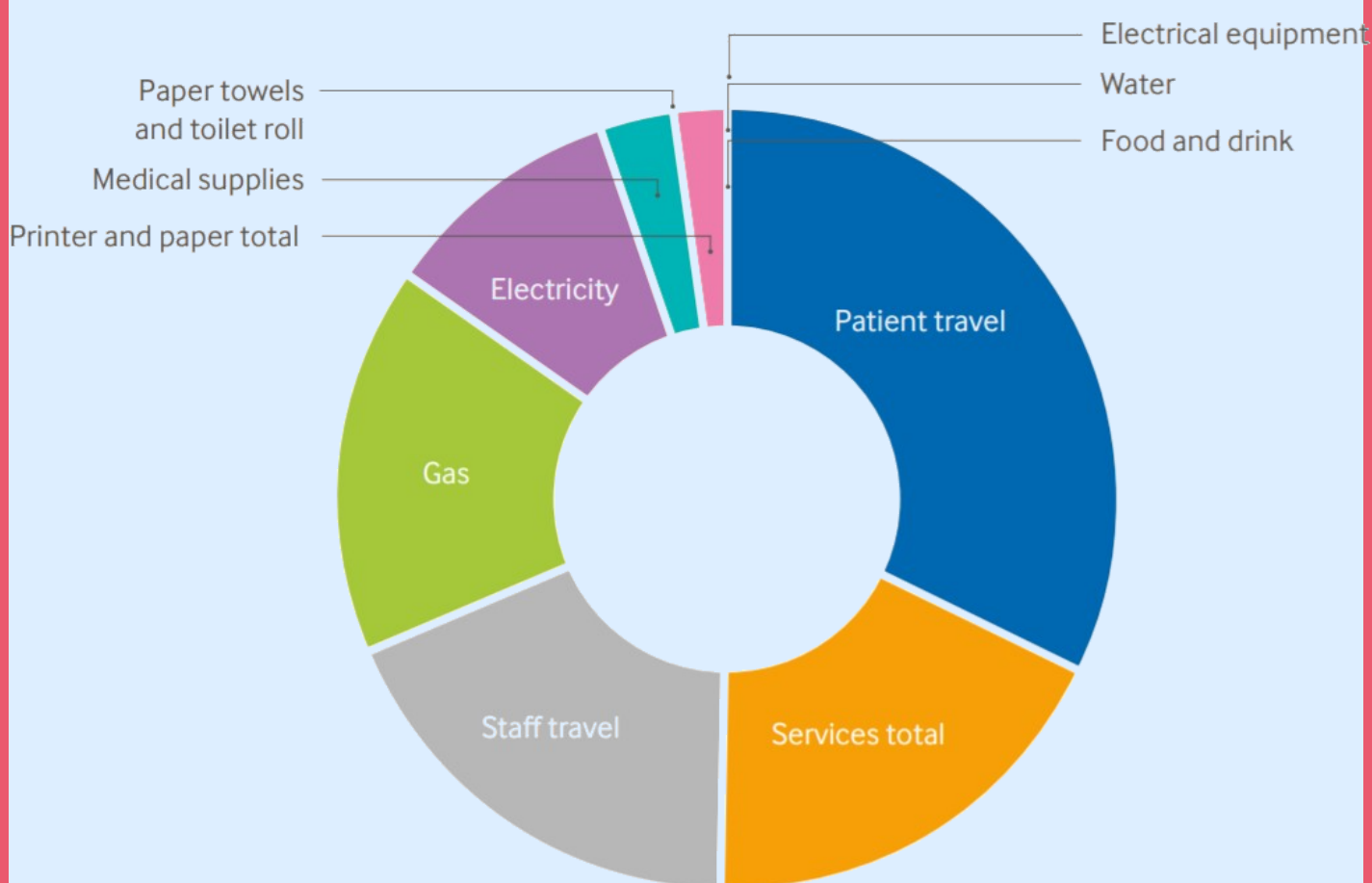
Virtual Care enables us to reduce the carbon footprint of our work

- Virtual care has a key role to play in mitigating the health sector's significant contributions to climate change.⁶
- Transportation to our offices is the second greatest contributor to the environmental impact of primary care and some of the impact of transportation can be reduced, when clinically appropriate, by providing virtual care.¹¹

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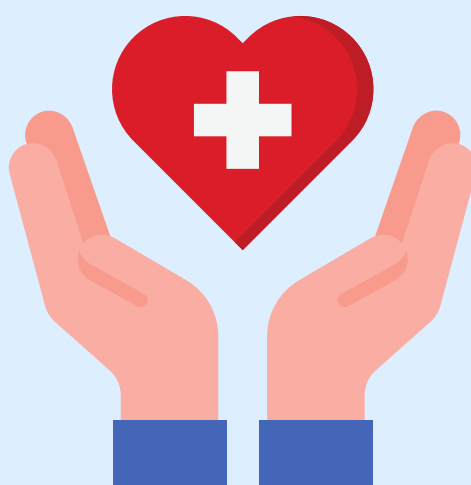
The Carbon Footprint of Primary Care in the UK, excluding tests, treatments, and pharmaceuticals.*



Canada Health Infoway suggests an adoption rate of 50% virtual care to benefit the environment. If this adoption rate is reached, carbon emissions would be reduced by 325,000 metric tons. **These savings are equivalent to taking more than 70,000 passenger vehicles off the road for a year.**⁶



*Learn more about reducing the greatest contributor to the carbon footprint of general practice, pharmaceutical prescriptions, in our [Choosing Wisely infographic](#).



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When selecting patients for virtual care, first consider:¹²

1. Are there any language barriers that could negatively impact the virtual visit? If so, does the patient have adequate support to participate?
2. How far is the patient travelling to see me? Do they have mobility issues? Would a virtual visit be more patient centered?
3. How tech savvy is the patient? Do they use an internet-enabled computer or smartphone and have email? If required, is assistance available?
4. Is the patient's device compatible with the virtual visit solution?
5. Is this an established patient-provider relationship?
6. What is the patient's cognitive capacity? If required, do they have a caregiver that can support?
7. Would a virtual visit avoid the need for patients to take time off work?
8. Would a virtual visit help avoid the cost of parking for my patients?

Resources for Providers

- [Dalla Lana Virtual Care Snapshot](#)
- [Canada Health Infoway: Virtual Care](#)
- [HFHT Virtual Care EMR resources](#)
- [HFHT Virtual Group Counselling and videos in assisting the use of Zoom on a phone and computer](#)
- [AFHTO Virtual Care Resources](#)

Resources for Patients

- [HFHT Webinars on Nutrition](#)
- [HFHT Webinars on Mental Health](#)
- [HFHT Webinar for Staying Active at Home](#)

References

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4. Abacus Data. [What Canadians Think About Virtual Health Care](#). Canadian Medical Association; 2020.
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12. [Adopting and Integrating Virtual Visits into Care: Draft Clinical Guidance For Health Care Providers in Ontario](#). Ontario Health: QI; 2020:26.

Join the HFHT Green Initiative, and access all infographics, videos, and other resources at:
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If you have any questions, please reach out to us: green.team@hamiltonfht.ca