



Telehealth – considerations for an effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health check

Background

The aim of this resource is to support provision of effective health checks using telehealth (video or phone). This advice builds on the work of the NACCHO–RACGP Partnership Project in 2019, which includes:

- recommendations of what to include in age-appropriate health checks, [templates available here](#)
- a guide to [useful high-quality health checks](#)
- information about the [development of the health check templates](#).

A good health check:

- is useful to the patient
- identifies health needs including patient health goals and priorities
- supports patients to take charge of their health and wellbeing
- provides a framework for primary and secondary disease prevention through healthcare advice, risk assessment and other measures
- is provided by the regular healthcare team/provider
- includes a plan for follow-up of identified health needs, priorities and goals.

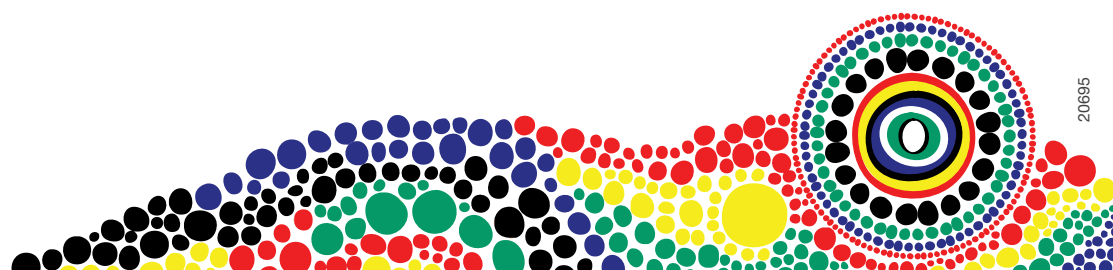
Source: The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health check templates. East Melbourne, Vic: NACCHO–RACGP Partnership Project, 2020. Available at <https://www.racgp.org.au/the-racgp/faculties/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health/guides/resources/2019-mbs-item-715-health-check-templates> [Accessed 29 September 2020].

Points to consider about telehealth:

- Supplements and does not replace face-to-face consultations
- Can support **different members** of the team (multidisciplinary) to provide the health check at **different times** (over multiple consultations)
- Offers greater flexibility in how health checks are available to patients and conducted by healthcare teams
- Different components may be offered by telehealth and in face-to-face consultations depending on
 - availability of healthcare staff in different settings
 - patient preferences
 - access to services (including due to restrictions eg during the pandemic).

Checking health and gathering information via telehealth (video or phone):

- Identify current health priorities.
- Identify current concerns including housing, safety, financial.
- Check social and emotional wellbeing and mental health including how people are managing restrictions and other impacts of the pandemic, such as
 - social connection
 - things that support health and wellbeing eg exercise, healthy eating
 - alcohol and other substance use.





- Check chronic disease management.
- Check medications.
- Check immunisations.
- Provide brief interventions eg to support smoking cessation.
- Discuss age-appropriate elements of the health check as per the [health check recommendations](#), such as developmental tracking; cervical, breast and bowel cancer screening; blood-borne virus and sexually transmissible infection screening.
- Reinforce COVID-19 public health and prevention messages.
- Give information about how and when to access healthcare.
- Agree on what needs to be done in the face-to-face visit (finalise health check and other healthcare including follow-up of identified health needs).
- Ensure the health record is up to date and accurate including health summary, recalls, etc.

In-person consultation (face-to-face):

- Complete the physical examination components of the health check including height, weight and other age-appropriate examinations eg heart, abdomen, chest, eyes, ears (otoscopy), skin, mouth and teeth as per [health check recommendations](#).
- Arrange and/or conduct investigations such as blood tests, blood-borne virus and sexually transmissible infection screening, other urine or point-of-care testing.
- Offer more in-depth interviewing/talking/social interaction.
- Consider the opportunity to give immunisations, complete cervical screening or make arrangements for another time.

Different ways to do a health check:

- In your health service/practice, consider which practitioner/role provides each part of the health check ie GP/nurse/Aboriginal health worker (AHW)/practitioner (AHP).
- Health checks may be completed over several visits/telehealth consultations and by different people.
- AHWs/AHPs may be able to ask questions in a way that is more appropriate than the GP.
- Health checks may be triggered by the patient or by recall/follow-up or opportunistically.

Finalising the health check – consider telehealth and face-to-face elements:

- Summarise health needs including patient priorities and goals, and plan response.
- Arrange a single visit to complete physical examination components.
- Arrange investigations.
- Make referrals and appointments.
- Consider coordinating the completion of the health check with services like immunisations, cervical screening, etc when booking appointments.
- Offer a summary of the health check to the patient, parent and/or carer when complete.

