



Telehealth, Telemedicine and Telecare: What's What?

When thinking about healthcare, most of us conjure up images of office visits or trips to the ER. Whether it's for a routine check-up, lab tests, an outpatient procedure or major surgery, the norm is for patients and caregivers to leave their homes (often sitting in traffic or rushing from work) to meet their doctor at a healthcare facility of some kind. But things are changing.

Based on advances in information and communications technologies, medical professionals as well as other "health and care" providers can now offer increasingly robust, remote (from their location to another), interactive (two-way) services to consumers, patients and caregivers.

The terms used to describe these broadband-enabled interactions include *telehealth*, *telemedicine* and *telecare*. "Telehealth" evolved from the word "telemedicine." "Telecare" is a similar term that you generally hear in Europe. All three of these words are *often* – but not *always* – used interchangeably. They can also have different meanings depending on who you ask. And that's precisely why you should ask your doctor, your insurance provider, your nurse, anyone who's part of your health and care universe...



... what do you mean when you say ...



Telemedicine? — Telemedicine can be defined as using telecommunications technologies to support the delivery of all kinds of medical, diagnostic and treatment-related services usually by doctors. For example, this includes conducting diagnostic tests, closely monitoring a patient's progress after treatment or therapy and facilitating access to specialists that are not located in the same place as the patient.



Telehealth? — Telehealth is similar to telemedicine but includes a wider variety of remote healthcare services beyond the doctor-patient relationship. It often involves services provided by nurses, pharmacists or social workers, for example, who help with patient health education, social support and medication adherence, and troubleshooting health issues for patients and their caregivers.



Telecare? — Telecare generally refers to technology that allows consumers to stay safe and independent in their own homes. For example, telecare may include consumer-oriented health and fitness apps, sensors and tools that connect consumers with family members or other caregivers, exercise tracking tools, digital medication reminder systems or early warning and detection technologies.

For More Information. Among other things, the Connect2Health Task Force is working to raise consumer awareness about the value of broadband in the health and care sectors. Learn about the FCC's Connect2Health Task Force and its work on consumer health issues at www.fcc.gov/health. For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer website at www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/consumer-publications-library.

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