

TELEHEALTH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

General FAQs

Cost/Insurance

- **What if I don't have insurance?**

Folks without insurance may be eligible to access care with us on a sliding fee scale, which is based on family size income. Additionally, when booking and checking in, PPLM staff will review the payment method and assist as needed. For more information about this, call 1-800-258-4448.

- **Is it expensive?**

Many of these services are covered by insurance and will be billed directly to the patient's insurance company, meaning someone will experience a similar copay as if they were in a doctor's office or health center. During the COVID-19 pandemic PPLM is covering the cost of supplies and shipping for patients accessing At-Home STI kits. If there are any concerns regarding cost, please call 1-800-258-4448.

- **Cost associated with rescheduling?**

There are no costs for rescheduling appointments. Someone can reschedule by calling us back or by accessing our website booking system at pplm.org. If someone misses their appointment, they may hear from us in order to reschedule, depending on the appointment type.

- **Do people need to be in Massachusetts? Have MA insurance?**

Patients need to be physically present in MA to access Telehealth services. Patients living outside of MA can access services at physical PPLM locations, however their ability to utilize some payment assistance options and health insurance may be limited. Patients should call 1-800-258-4448 to discuss further options with a member of our staff.

- **Does PPLM accept out-of-state Medicaid?**

No, PPLM does not accept non-Massachusetts Medicaid health insurances.

Network Issues/Security/ Confidentiality

- **What if we get disconnected?**

A Health Care Assistant will call you to help you troubleshoot any technology issues and check you in before your appointment to minimize this issue. Should there be connection issues, you can click on your link again and rejoin the call. Your HCA or clinician will call your phone if issues persist and you may want to try switching devices (using a computer instead of a phone, etc). Computers with a camera tend to work best, but care can also be accessed through a phone with a camera. Either way, be sure to have your charger handy so your device doesn't run out of battery. There may also be the option of completing your visit by phone call, and initial STI testing consults will be done by phone only.

- **Can I use public wifi during my calls?**

You can use whatever wifi you are comfortable with to access these calls, but it's vital that you are in a private and confidential space when accessing care through telehealth. We recommend that you are in a space where you are comfortable discussing confidential health information with a clinician, just like you would in an exam room.

- **Is this really safe? Secure?**

We recommend that you are in a space where you are comfortable discussing confidential health information with a clinician, just like you would in an exam room.

- **What if I can't use my audio or video because of confidentiality?**

We will work with you in terms of audio and video access. It is ideal to have both audio and video access, but we are able to troubleshoot with patients who only have access to one or the other.

Access for Minors

- **What telehealth services are available for minors?**

Minors without parental or guardian consent can access At-Home STI testing kits, birth control consultations, emergency contraception, pregnancy options counseling, and smoking cessation counseling.

Minors with parental or guardian consent can access PrEP for HIV prevention, smoking cessation treatment, and Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy for patients 16/17.

- **I am dependent on my parents insurance, will my insurance contact them about telehealth services I've received?**

If patients are concerned about confidentiality, we encourage them to contact our C&R hotline to discuss steps they need to take to ensure that no information is sent to the primary subscriber. Additionally, many individuals who are seeking confidential services will likely qualify for our sliding scale program, which will eliminate or greatly reduce the cost of the visit – making it feasible to avoid health insurance utilization entirely. If patients choose to discuss this option, our staff can discuss when booking the appointment, or during the appointment.

Appointment Structure

- **Is there anything I can do in advance of my appointment to make it go as quickly and as smoothly as possible?**

Yes! We recommend downloading the Teladoc Health Patient app for virtual appointments. Patients will also receive a link for an hour prior to their appointment. In addition, new patients need to complete four consent forms that are available in their patient portal account. We will be in contact with information on how to make an account and complete the consent forms. In addition, patients should visit their patient portal and complete the “self check-in” next to their visit. This will allow the patient to sign consents with us if they are a new patient.

- **What will happen in my appointment? How long are they?**

Just like in our health center, a Health Center Assistant will be the first point-of-contact. Patients should expect an invitation to our telehealth platform about 1 hour prior to their appointment time. The visit will open about 15 minutes prior to the scheduled time. You can join any time after that, and your health care assistant will join to start your check-in.

Our Health Care Assistant can also assist with any technology issues and ensure the consent forms are completed. Once this is complete, they hang up and transfer the patient to the provider who may either call them or provide a video link. While many of our appointments are completed in less time, it's good practice to budget at least 40 minutes for the appointment. If you are seeking Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy for the first time, you can expect your visit to be closer to 1 hour.

At-Home STI Testing

Testing

- **Which STIs am I being tested for?**

Our At-Home STI kits test for gonorrhea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis.

- **What about HIV testing?**

HIV testing is not currently available via telehealth, but your clinician can discuss some options for HIV related services with you. This can include risk assessment, referring you to in-person rapid HIV testing at one of our health centers, referrals to our trusted medical partners, scheduling an appointment in the future and providing information about HIV prevention resources.

- **How often should I get tested?**

The answer to this is unique to someone's sexual health needs and sexual activity. You can't tell if you have an STI just by the way you look or feel — most of the time, people with STIs don't have any symptoms. [Take our quiz to find out if it's time for you to get tested.](#) It's extra important to get tested if you've had unprotected sex, or if you find out your partner has an STI.

- **Will any medications I take affect my at-home STI test?**

No, medications or recreational drugs will not affect your at-home STI test unless they impair your ability to collect a sample.

- **Are at home tests as accurate as in clinic tests?**

These tests are the same tests that are used in clinic, and samples are collected the same way! When a patient accesses gonorrhea and chlamydia testing at a PPLM health center, they collect their own urine sample or perform a vaginal self-swab.

Troubleshooting

- **I spilled the fluid in the tube.**

Call 1-800-258-4448, option 2 to let us know, and we'll send you a new one.

- **I put too much urine in the tube.**

Mail it in and we will try to process it. We will call you if we cannot run the test.

- **How do I collect the urine?**

Find another copy of directions for sample collection [here](#).

- **How do I collect the swab?**

Find directions for swab collection here: [vaginal](#), [rectal](#), [oral](#).

- **The swab does not fit in the tube. What do I do?**

Place the swab in the tube with the indented part of the shaft at the same level as the top of the tube. Break the swab and throw away the top part. Recap the tube.

Scheduling

- **When do I have a call with a provider? Before I get my kit? After? While I collect samples?**

You will talk with a provider before you receive your kit, to talk about what tests will be included, how often you should be tested, how and where to collect your samples, etc and any other sexual and reproductive health concerns you would like to discuss.

- **Is there someone I can reach out to with questions during my sample collection?**

If you have any questions during sample collection, review your directions. If you still have questions, call 1-800-258-4448, option 2 and let them know you have questions about your STI testing sample collection.

- **What is the cost for a replacement kit?**

Should someone need a new STI testing kit, we can replace it at no cost. Here are some suggestions if you've misplaced a piece of the kit:

- The pipette, shipping box, or plastic biohazard bag
 - We will send you another. Please call us at 1-800-258-4448, option 2 and let us know.
- The urine cup
 - Use a small paper cup and fill half an inch.
- The instructions
 - Those can be found here: [vaginal swab](#), [urine sample](#), [throat swab](#), [rectal swab](#)

Results

- **How will I get my results?**

If someone has negative test results, meaning their test did not prove they have one of the STIs that they were tested for, their results will be available on their patient portal account. They are often available within a few days of our lab receiving the samples, with a window of up to two weeks. If someone's test results are positive, meaning they have an STI, they will be followed up with by PPLM staff for next steps.

- **What should I do if my test comes back positive?**

If your test comes back positive, one of medical providers will follow up. It may mean treatment at one of our health centers or accessing a prescription at a pharmacy closer to you. If you test positive for chlamydia, we can also provide anonymous prescriptions for your partners through our expedited partner therapy program.

- **Who will have access to my results?**

This is up to you! Any results will be available through your private patient portal account. If someone's test results are positive, meaning they have an STI, they will receive a telephone call. If they don't answer multiple phone calls, they will have a letter sent to whatever address they provided for mail.

Mail & Shipping

- **What if my test is lost in the mail?**

It may take up to a week for an STI testing kit to reach you, or to return the PPLM lab once you ship it back. If the kit gets lost on its way to you or if your samples are lost, we will replace your kit. Let us know if a week has passed since your appointment and you have not received your kit, or if two weeks have passed since you sent your kit to us and you have no results in the patient portal.

- **Do I have to sign for my STI kit when it arrives?**

No, you will not need to sign for your STI testing kit.

- **When can I expect the package to arrive?**

The package should arrive at the address you gave us within a week of your tele health visit, and you should return it with your samples within a week of receiving it.

- **Will people be able to tell that it's an STI testing kit in the mail?**

The box will not be labeled with anything related to sexual and reproductive health. The return address will be "1055 Commonwealth Ave" and will not say Planned Parenthood.

