

SHOULD YOU SEE YOUR GP ONLINE?

A video appointment with your doctor can save you time and money



Everything from paying bills to booking a holiday can be done with a few clicks of a mouse. And now it's possible to see your GP online via a video or Skype call to your computer, tablet or smartphone. It might seem futuristic, but 'GP video calls work very well. After a moment, you make that personal connection and it's easy to forget there is screen between you and your doctor,' says Dr Aifric Boylan, Director of Qoctor, an online GP consultation service. Advantages include avoiding doctor's surgery germs, and saving precious time when all

you need is a repeat script.

Here's how it works:

MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

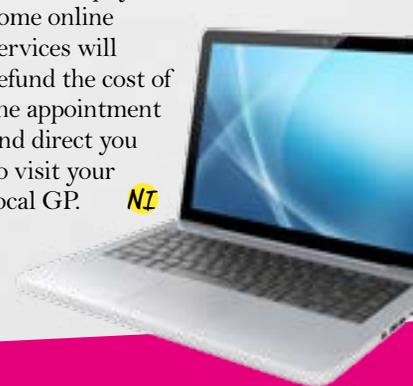
Type 'How to see a GP online' into Google and you'll get lots of options for online doctors. Choose a top-ranking service, such as healthengine.com.au which has around 10,000 GPs on its books around the country. You'll usually need to register, then search for a GP (lots of sites also offer appointments with dentists, physios and other health practitioners) and book your preferred time slot. When the appointment is due, the doc will call you via a video or phone consultation.

WHEN TO SEE A GP ONLINE

'Video calls are good for low-risk illnesses, such as colds or a rash – things that can be diagnosed visually without intensive examinations,' says Dr Marcus Tan, Founder, CEO & Medical Director at HealthEngine. Minor issues such as medical certificates, referral letters and repeat prescriptions are popular reasons to see a virtual doctor. They can mail scripts out to you, or 'if you need urgent medication they can call ahead to a pharmacy who will usually dispense them on the proviso that you send them the original script when you receive it,' says Marcus.

WHEN YOU NEED TO GO TO THE SURGERY

Of course, online services are not meant to replace face-to-face appointments. "Pap smears, taking blood, breast exams, cutting out a suspicious mole – things like that all need a trip to the doctor's surgery. Likewise, if you feel unwell, have acute pain or you feel faint or very distressed," says Marcus. If you do need a physical examination, some online services will refund the cost of the appointment and direct you to visit your local GP. **NI**



Group exercise is a great way to lose weight while you make friends.

3 ways

YOUR GP CAN HELP YOU LOSE WEIGHT

- 1 They can refer you to a dietitian who can write a personalised weight-loss meal plan.
- 2 To help start the conversation, take the weight-loss quiz at doctoronyourside.com.au and show the printed results to your doctor.
- 3 Your GP can refer you to services such as fitness groups in your area.