

Teledentistry Use Beyond the Pandemic



COVID-19 has not only highlighted the vast inequities that exist across the United States but has also increased awareness and utilization of technologies needed to address inequities. Teledentistry is one such technology.

A form of telehealth, [teledentistry is a virtual set of tools that allow for electronic communication and delivery of health services](#). Teledentistry can be useful in a variety of settings and situations. For instance, providers can use teledentistry when patients cannot be present, for various reasons, in a traditional office setting. Providers can also use teledentistry in the traditional office setting to connect a patient's caregiver to the dental team in the operatory in order to review findings and discuss treatment plans.

While its use has expanded dramatically during the pandemic, teledentistry should continue to serve as a tool to improve access to care and health outcomes even after the pandemic ends. At the same time, it can provide patients with an opportunity for a greater role and voice in their own care.

Four Reasons Why Teledentistry Is Here to Stay

[States are better prepared to weather a crisis.](#)

Whether in the midst of an infectious disease outbreak or natural disaster, teledentistry will help ensure that people do not lose access to care. Teledentistry allows people to receive care in compliance with social distancing guidelines and reduces the number of visits to hospital emergency departments (EDs), which can easily be overwhelmed during a crisis.



Dental services provided in EDs generally cost more and focus on managing pain and infections rather than addressing the underlying oral health condition. Because EDs often lack systems for oral health provider referrals, many patients return to the ED again for the same problem.

[Dental care is made more convenient and reduces costs to consumers and states.](#)

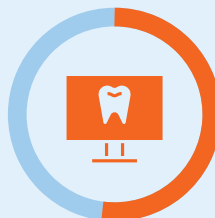
Researchers have cited [teledentistry's role](#)

“in reducing the costs of and barriers to accessing oral health care, improving oral health outcomes, increasing use of oral health care resources and leading to the establishment of a dental home for underserved children.”

Patients with at least one teledentistry visit

cost 10% less to treat

in 2018 than dental patients who didn't use teledentistry.



52%

of patients agreed that a **teledentistry appointment “makes getting care easier than a face-to-face appointment.”**

Oral health is improved by expanding the reach of care.

Adults benefit from teledentistry models that offer them flexible options for receiving care, consulting with dental providers, or obtaining educational information about their oral health.

Providing more Americans with access to dental services and oral health education leads to healthier mouths, which, in turn, strengthens overall health.

Studies demonstrate a clear bidirectional relationship between periodontal disease and diabetes. Pneumonia, a leading cause of infections among nursing home patients, is another example of how [access to oral health services affects overall health](#). Research shows that improving oral hygiene among medically fragile seniors holds promise for reducing morbidity and mortality from aspiration pneumonia.



Periodontal (gum) disease is a chronic bacterial infection of the gums and bone that surround the teeth. **Gum disease has been linked to heart disease and stroke. It may also affect blood glucose control and contribute to the progression of diabetes.**



People with diabetes are up to

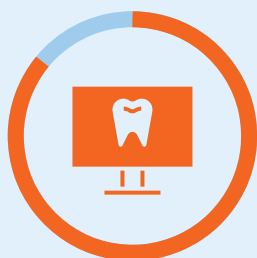
3X more likely

to develop gum disease

because they are more susceptible to contracting infections.

Patients are embracing it.

A recent [CareQuest Institute survey](#) demonstrates that patients are satisfied with their teledentistry experiences and appreciate the flexibility it offers, enabling them to secure oral health services without the need for a face-to-face appointment.



86%

of patients said they were **satisfied with their overall teledentistry experience.**



95%

of patients said they were **“able to speak freely with the dentist and ask questions” when they used teledentistry.**



93%

of patients said they were able **“to easily understand what the dentist told me about my concern.”**



86%

of patients said they would **use teledentistry again.**

Suggested Citation: CareQuest Institute for Oral Health. *Teledentistry Use Beyond the Pandemic*. Boston, MA, August 2021.