

ALTOONA LUNG SPECIALISTS



What's a Televisit?

WRITTEN BY SHERRI STAYER

A televisit is a real-time appointment with your provider (physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant) from the comfort and safety of your own home. The televisit may be a phone call or a video chat. Your provider assesses your symptoms, recommends a plan of care and can even send a prescription to the pharmacy. Just like an in-person office visit, the provider is required to create a record of the televisit to be placed in the chart.

Televisits became extremely popular and necessary at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many patients feared leaving their home to visit a physician's office where they could be exposed to the virus. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, many insurance companies encouraged and agreed to pay physicians for providing televisits including covering the copays for their patients.

Televisits remain a convenient method of service to patients unable to come to the office. Most insurance companies will cover the cost of the televisit but many no longer cover the copays for this service. This has led to some patient confusion. A televisit is considered the same as an in-person office visit. Your provider files the usual insurance claim for the visit and is paid as before. The patient is then responsible for the copay portion of the bill.

Due to the overwhelming strain on the local hospital systems, it is now more important than ever for patients to be closely followed. Patients with chronic lung disease such as COPD, asthma and interstitial fibrosis are at high risk for flare ups and hospitalizations. Close follow up and communication with your pulmonary physician can reduce the need for in-patient care. We strongly encourage our chronic lung disease patients who may be having increased symptoms to call the office and let a medical provider determine if a televisit or in-office visit is most appropriate.

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The Buzz

by Dr. Z



FREEDOM
FROM SMOKING®
AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION.

Free classes designed specifically for adults like you, who want to quit smoking. Hundreds of thousands have become smokefree through the American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking program, either online, in-person, or on your own.

Please register by calling 814-946-2845 extension 200

Antibody Tests

WRITTEN BY DR. GEORGE ZLUPKO

I would like to give some of you an opportunity to save some money. Patients have been requesting COVID antibody tests to help determine if they have had a COVID-19 infection and are now protected by natural occurring antibodies to the virus, or if they have or still have antibodies related to previous vaccination and are, therefore, immune to the virus. These tests have been ordered by physicians in our area as the result of patient requests, or out of concern for the immune status of their patient. There are even home test kits that patients may purchase to test themselves. One Florida based firm sells direct-to-consumer test kits, which promise to identify the number of neutralizing antibodies that patients may have all for the low price of \$170.

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What you need to know is that the protective antibodies and the levels needed to prevent disease have not been fully worked out, and cannot tell us if you are totally immune, partially immune, or at risk for serious disease. This applies to patients who have so-called "natural immunity" and those who have been vaccinated.

If and when correlations and levels of protection can be determined by examining antibody levels, tests will need to be calibrated and standardized as has been done with other vaccine-preventable diseases, such as tetanus, diphtheria, and measles.

Until these standardizations and calibrations can be done and each test is found to be valid, I would save your time, effort, and expense.