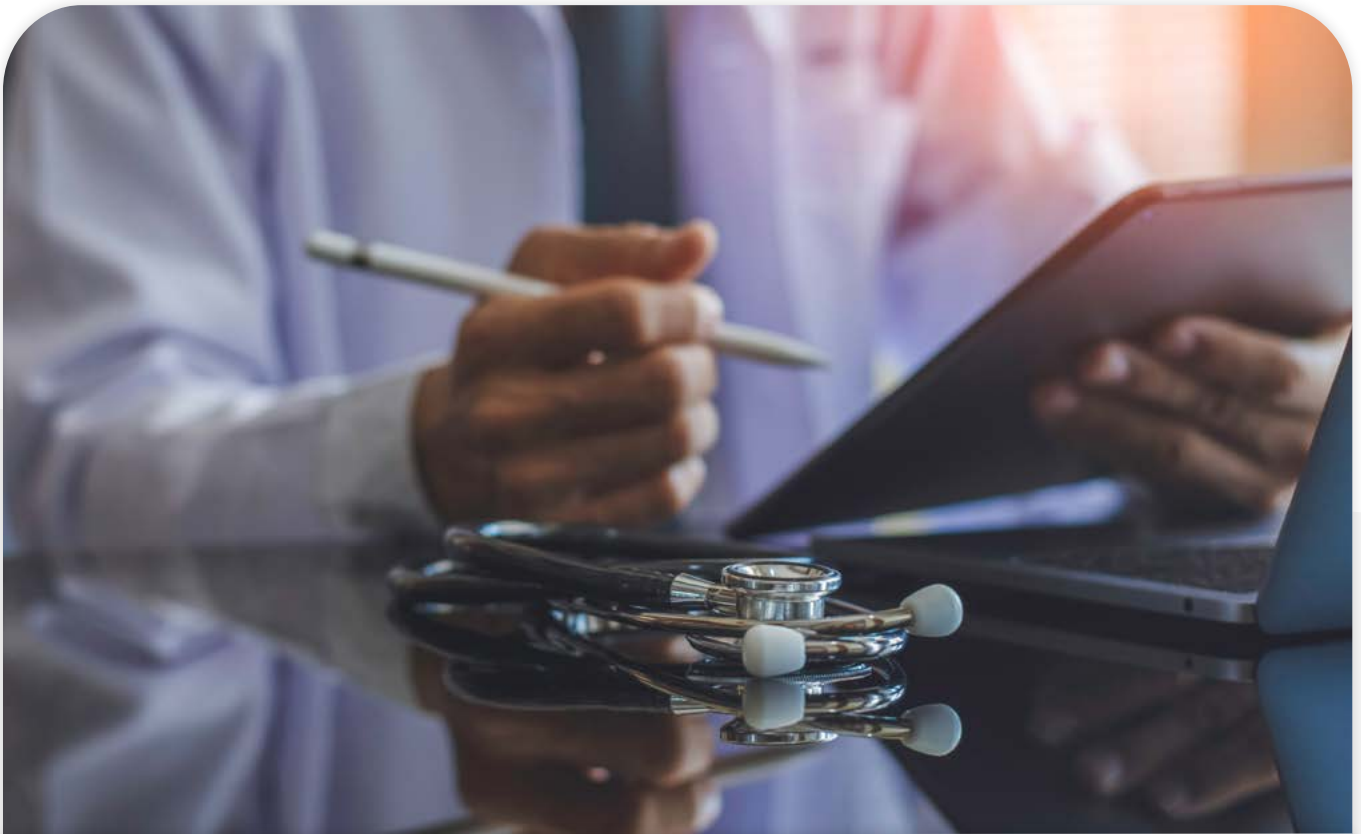




# Comparison Guide: Exploring Fully Integrated *vs.* Free Telehealth Solutions





## Telehealth has arrived, and it's here to stay.

The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst for telehealth's rapid acceleration. What was once a nice-to-have is now a must-have for healthcare practices and providers. Now, almost [88 percent](#) of Americans surveyed said they want to continue using telehealth services after the pandemic.

With this in mind, now is a great time to step back and evaluate the best telehealth solution for your organization. Both patients and providers want a virtual care solution that is easy to use and allows for a smooth experience—but comparing your options and selecting the one best suited to your practice can be challenging.

Let's dive into the challenges, features, and benefits to keep in mind when choosing between free and fully integrated telehealth solutions.



# Top Challenges Associated with Using Free Telehealth Solutions

Telehealth wasn't an urgent need before the pandemic; however, COVID-19 prompted many healthcare practices to adopt free telehealth solutions, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and GoTo Meeting, for their virtual visits.

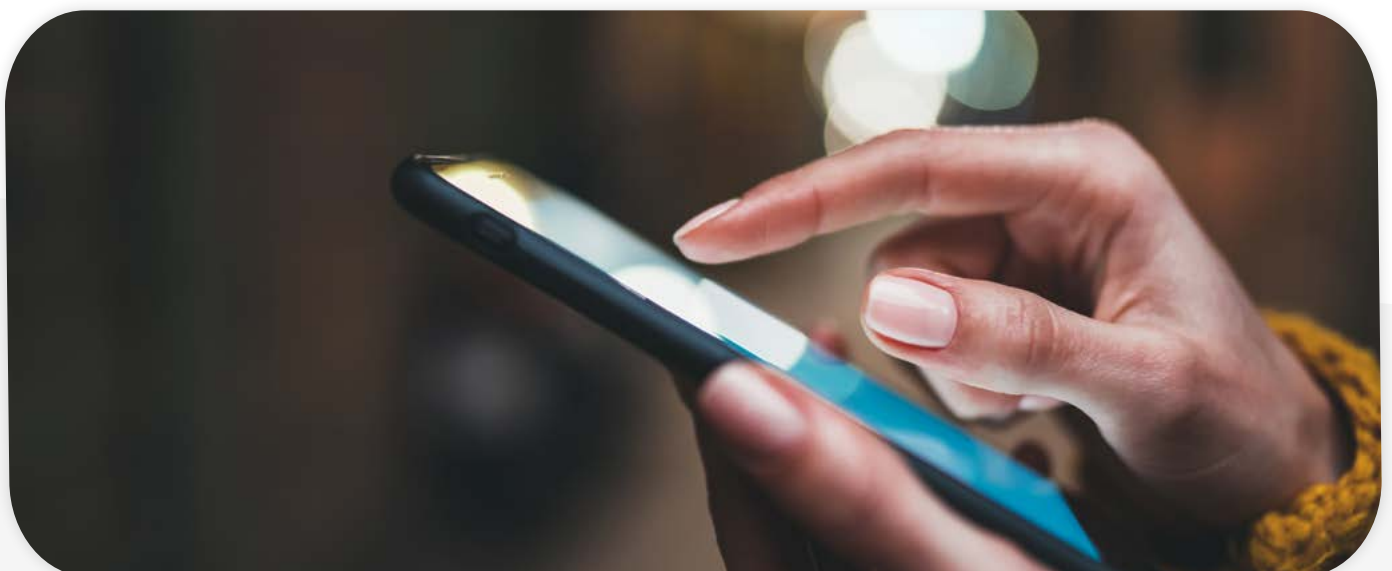
While these tools offered a quick and easy solution at the start of the pandemic, they're not ideal for practices looking to offer a next-generation virtual care experience. Two years later, and the challenges associated with using free telehealth solutions are clear:



## CHALLENGES FOR PATIENTS

Healthcare consumers want and expect their providers to offer virtual visits—but the technology powering said visits matters. Patients expect a seamless experience, and clunky, ill-equipped technology simply won't cut it.

In fact, in one survey, [50 percent of patients](#) said they believe that a negative digital experience makes the entire medical interaction unfavorable. Because many of the free videoconferencing tools on the market weren't designed for virtual care, they tend to offer a suboptimal digital experience at best. The unfortunate reality is that this can lead to decreased patient satisfaction, engagement, and adherence.





## CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDERS

Free solutions are equally (or more) frustrating for providers, particularly when it comes to handling visit-related administrative tasks. Confusing, inaccurate, or hard-to-read virtual visit schedules can lead to scheduling gaps and over- or underbookings for providers.

What's more, free solutions don't integrate with electronic health records (EHRs), practice management systems, and other patient engagement tools. Lack of integration prevents these tools from fitting into [clinical workflows](#), which creates a significant barrier to digital transformation for practices and providers.



## CHALLENGES FOR PRACTICES

Healthcare practices also face challenges associated with free telehealth solutions. These tools lack the features necessary for an end-to-end virtual visit, such as digital waiting rooms and patient intake forms that upload to the EHR in real time.

But that's not all: Lack of security protocols and HIPAA compliance puts both practices and patients at risk. There's also the risk of increased practice churn. Today's healthcare consumers have high expectations, and they're not afraid to change providers in search of a better digital experience.

"According to U.S.-based clinicians, tools that do not fit into clinical workflows, lack of proper training, and lack of clear communication within the health organization are impeding efforts."

**HIMSS 2022 and *italicize* 2022 State of Healthcare Report**



# Must-Have Features to Look for in a Telehealth Solution

Telehealth solutions designed with healthcare in mind will have the must-have features required to deliver a top-quality virtual visit, such as:

## A Great User Experience

Your telehealth solution needs to offer an exceptional user experience to ensure it's easy and convenient for patients to complete all required steps. For example, everything from scheduling the initial virtual visit to completing intake forms and post-visit surveys should be as seamless and user-friendly as possible.

## End-to-End Virtual Care

End-to-end virtual care is the goal, and a next-generation telehealth solution is the answer. That means the technology you choose should be designed to automate and support each step of the virtual care journey, including:

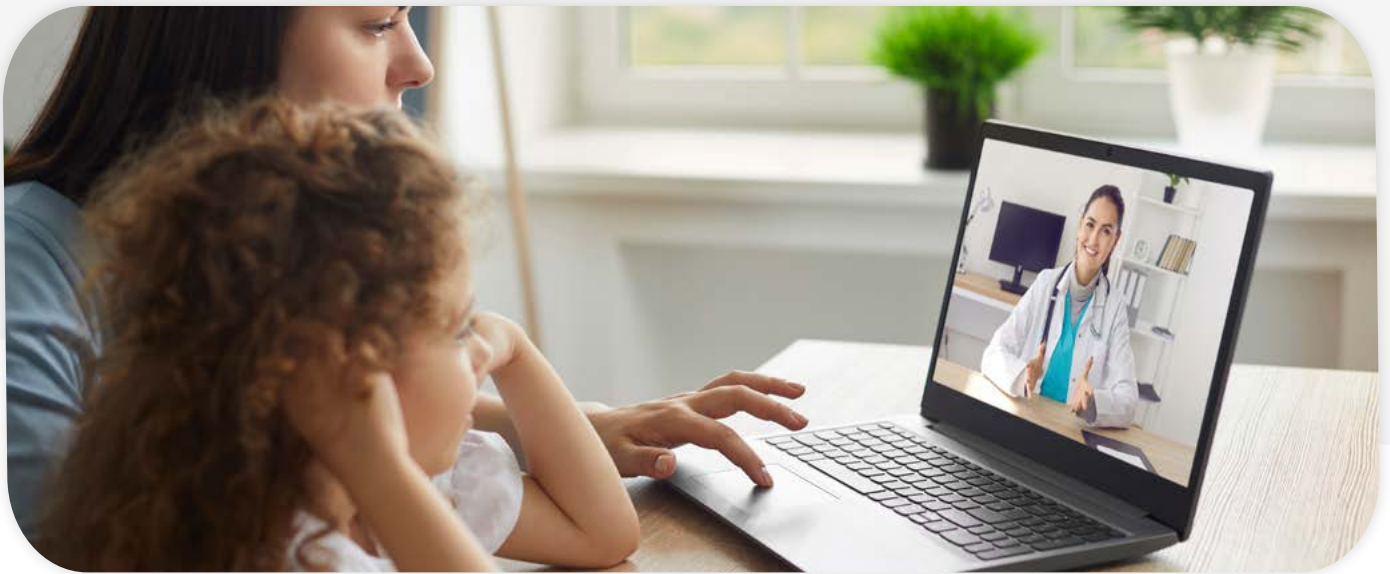
- ✔ Appointment scheduling
- ✔ Patient registration and intake
- ✔ Virtual waiting room and visit
- ✔ Post-visit follow-ups and surveys

Additionally, your virtual visit solution should also enable your practice to automate workflows, create custom forms, and access customizable dashboards with reporting analytics. This will allow you to evaluate important metrics, such as patient wait times, virtual visit durations, patient satisfaction levels, and more.

**Your telehealth solution needs to offer an exceptional user experience to ensure it's easy and convenient for patients to complete all required steps.**

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## Seamless Integration

Integrated systems are the key to telehealth success. Direct, two-way integration with EHRs, practice management systems, and other patient engagement tools can help your practice align with in-office [practice workflows](#) without missing a beat.

## Security Protocols

Your telehealth solution needs to have security protocols in place in order to protect private health information and remain compliant with regulatory requirements. This way, you can ensure compliance and protect patients' privacy when conducting virtual visits.

## Cloud-Based Solution

The best telehealth solutions are cloud-based and are easily accessible via a web browser without the need to use login credentials. Cloud-based systems don't require software installation, complex maintenance, or updates that lead to downtime; they're easy and convenient for patients, practices, and providers.

## Patient Engagement Platform

Another important consideration when assessing a telehealth solution is whether or not it's part of a broader patient engagement platform. Working with a company that truly understands patient engagement and offers additional solutions will put you on the right path for all of your future engagement initiatives.



# Benefits of Using an Integrated, End-to-End Telehealth Solution

Integrated, end-to-end telehealth solutions benefit patients, practices, and providers in numerous ways. Key benefits include:

- ✔ **Seamless interfacing with other solutions:** Integrated telehealth solutions communicate with other systems in real time for seamless virtual care.
- ✔ **Customization to align with clinical workflows:** Tailor your solution to align with in-office workflows and ensure [every step](#) is accounted for with ease.
- ✔ **Excellent virtual care experiences for patients:** Patients can start their visit with a single click via a secure link—no downloads or registration required.
- ✔ **Increased efficiency due to automated workflows:** Automate email/text visit invites, form generation, patient encounter creation, and visit analytics.
- ✔ **Mimics in-office operations for a great experience:** Easily transition between staff and provider interactions, even when conducting a virtual visit.
- ✔ **Reduced administrative hassles for providers:** Reduce the administrative burden for providers with easy check-in, a virtual waiting room, and handoffs.
- ✔ **Easy management of virtual visit schedules:** Customizable dashboards with filters make it simple for staff and providers to manage virtual visit schedules.



67 percent of physicians surveyed said separate schedule blocks would improve telehealth workflows.



# Choosing the Right Vendor Partner for Virtual Care

When evaluating potential virtual care solutions, the technology itself is not the only important consideration to keep in mind. Look for a vendor partner who not only offers the right technology and features but also demonstrates:



## DEDICATION TO THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

The best vendor partners are inherently dedicated to equipping providers with the tools and support they need to deliver quality [patient experiences](#). In other words, you need a partner who keeps current on what patients want and expect from their providers—and then adapts their solutions to help you meet those expectations.



## UNDERSTANDING OF CLINICAL WORKFLOWS

In addition to patient engagement expertise, your vendor partner should possess a deep understanding of [clinical workflows](#). They should also be aware of where and how pain points tend to occur and slow down virtual visit management.







### **EXCEPTIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Even the most user-friendly of telehealth solutions may require technical support at some point in time. Your vendor partner should offer exceptional customer service and technical support to help you resolve problems (if needed) and minimize any downtime.



### **COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION**

Choose a vendor partner who's committed to innovation. A forward-thinking partner will help your practice prepare for technological advancements while releasing continuous updates to keep pace with evolving consumer expectations.

**Is your practice ready to upgrade to a fully  
integrated telehealth solution?**

Request a demo to see our eHealth solution and full  
patient engagement platform in action.

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