

In recent years, **telehealth** and online clinics have transformed how we access healthcare. Video consultations and online booking screens make it easy to see a GP or specialist without leaving home, saving travel time and reducing the hassle of in-person visits. However, remote consultations have limitations. Sometimes, an online clinic might tell you that you need a physical examination or further tests that cannot be done remotely, and advise you to be seen in person.

If you're new to telehealth, this can feel confusing. What does it mean for your care? Is it a sign your issue is serious? How do you move to the next step smoothly? And crucially, what happens if you struggle with technology or need human guidance?

Let's explore what happens when an online clinic says you need to be seen in person, why it's an important part of good care, and how the system should support you along that journey.

Remote Consultations: Convenience Without Compromise

Telehealth's biggest draw is convenience. You can book an appointment online in minutes, attend from home via video call, and avoid sitting in a crowded waiting room. The booking screens are typically designed to be fast and user-friendly, aiming to streamline access.

However, speed and ease of booking are not the same as thorough techonthego.co.uk clinical care. Remote consultations work well for many routine issues — like discussing symptoms, reviewing medication, or managing chronic conditions — but they cannot do everything, particularly when a physical examination is crucial.

Video calls don't allow a doctor to:

- Listen carefully to your lungs with a stethoscope
- Palpate an abdomen or swollen joint
- Perform certain neurological checks
- Take blood pressure, swabs, or blood samples

These physical assessments often reveal vital information that shapes diagnosis and treatment. So when an online clinic advises an *in-person assessment referral*, it's not a failure of technology but a sign of responsible care. The clinician prioritises your safety and aims to avoid missing a serious condition.

What Is the Telehealth Escalation Pathway?

Good telehealth providers have a clear **escalation pathway** — a planned process to guide patients from remote consultation to in-person care when needed. This pathway prevents patients from falling through the cracks and ensures the highest quality of care regardless of consultation format.

1. **Initial Online Booking:** You select your appointment time from an online booking screen, ideally with clear information on how the service works and when an in-person visit might be needed.
2. **Video Consultation:** A clinician talks with you via video, asking detailed questions and assessing whether remote care is suitable.
3. **Decision Point:** If the clinician can manage your case remotely, you receive advice, prescriptions, or follow-up plans digitally. If not, they recommend in-person assessment.
4. **In-Person Referral:** The service guides you to the next step — often booking a face-to-face appointment, referring to a physical clinic, or giving clear instructions on what to do.

- 5. **Human Support:** Throughout, you should have easy access to real people for help — whether to clarify instructions, reschedule, or address accessibility needs.

This structured flow balances convenience with clinical safety.

Understanding Your Online Clinic Next Steps

Being told you need an in-person assessment can raise many questions. The most common concerns we hear are:

- **Why can't it all be done remotely?** Sometimes, subtle physical signs are critical to diagnosis. Video cameras and your description cannot always replace hands-on examination.
- **Does this mean my problem is serious?** Not necessarily. In-person assessments also serve to rule out conditions or perform routine checks. The goal is accuracy, not alarm.
- **How do I arrange the face-to-face appointment?** Ideally, the online clinic's system will offer a direct booking option or link you to a partner clinic. The guidance should be simple and clear.
- **What if I can't get to the clinic easily?** Accessibility is key. You should be able to contact a human helper to discuss transport assistance, home visits, or alternative options.

What to Look for in Patient Portals and Booking Screens

Many online clinics provide patient portals where you can view your consultation notes, test results, and next steps. The design and wording here matter tremendously in helping you understand your care journey.



A good patient portal should:

- Clearly state when an in-person visit is recommended
- Explain why face-to-face assessment is needed in simple, non-technical language
- Offer direct options to book or arrange the next appointment
- Provide contact details for a support team or helpline
- Be accessible to people with varying levels of tech confidence — for example, simple menus without jargon, language translation options, and compatibility with assistive technologies

If your online clinic's portal or emails are vague or full of confusing medical terms, it's worth calling their support line. Patient experience counts as much as clinical quality.

Accessibility: Supporting Less Tech-Confident Patients

Not everyone enjoys the ease of booking online or speaking over video calls. Older adults, people with disabilities, and those with limited internet access may find telehealth challenging.

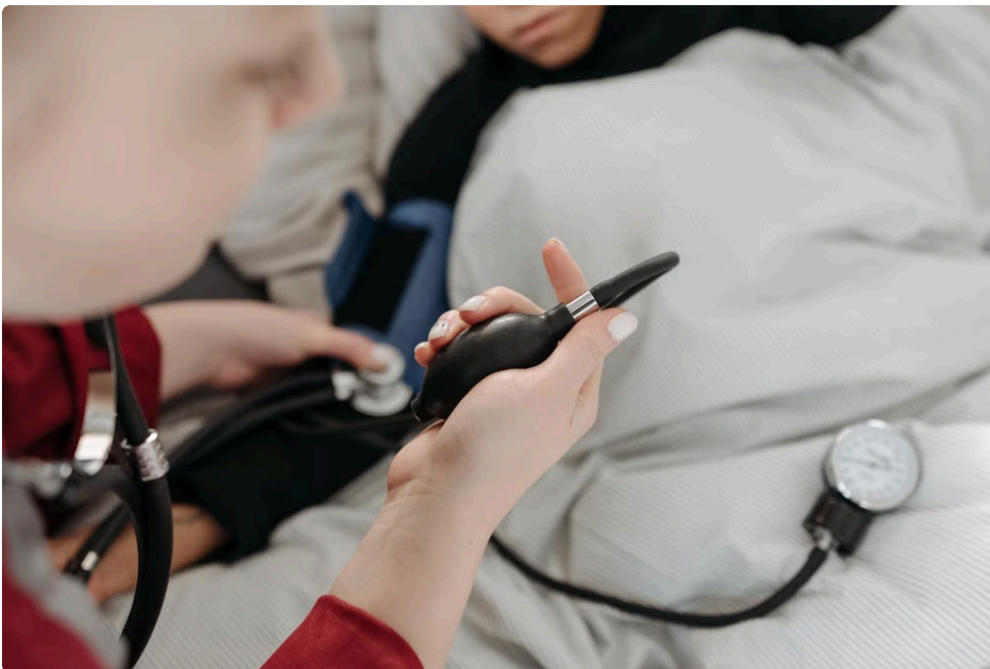
Recognising this, exemplary online clinics offer multiple ways to access care:

- **Telephone booking and consultations** for people who prefer or need to avoid screen time
- **Step-by-step phone support** to help book, prepare for video calls, or interpret instructions
- **Clear printed instructions** available by post upon request
- **Options to request in-person care directly** without going through complicated digital menus

If your online clinic doesn't provide these supports and you find the process stressful, don't hesitate to ask for alternative access methods. Good services prioritise your needs over their technical workflows.

What Happens When Something Goes Wrong?

Let's be honest: no system is perfect. Sometimes technical difficulties disrupt a video call, instructions about next steps get lost in a cluttered inbox, or the recommended in-person appointment is inconveniently delayed.



When you face problems, here are some tips to keep your care on track:

1. **Contact the clinic promptly:** Look for a phone number or chat support on their website. Avoid email if time is pressing.
2. **Explain clearly what the issue is:** Whether it's a missed referral, confusing instructions, or a technical glitch, being specific helps the team fix it faster.
3. **Ask for confirmation in writing:** If you get an appointment or important advice, request an email or message for your records.
4. **Keep notes of all contacts:** Document who you spoke to and when, just in case you have to escalate the matter.

5. **Remember your rights:** You can request a second opinion or choose a different provider if the service isn't meeting your needs.

A transparent escalation pathway and human-centered support make navigating these challenges less stressful.

Summary: Balancing Convenience and Quality

Aspect What to Expect Why It Matters Video consultations Quick, comfortable way to discuss symptoms and get advice remotely Reduce travel and exposure, convenient for many conditions Online booking screens Easy to schedule appointments 24/7 with clear time options User-friendly interface improves access, but speed doesn't equal quality In-person assessment referral Recommendation for a physical appointment for thorough exams or tests Essential when remote methods can't fully assess your health Patient portals Platforms to review notes, results, next steps, and book follow-ups Clear, accessible information prevents confusion and delays Human support Helplines and staff assistance for booking, tech issues, or special needs Ensures nobody gets left behind due to technology barriers or complexity

Final Thoughts

Being told you need an in-person appointment after a video consultation is a common and often positive step—not a sign you've done something wrong or that telehealth has failed. It shows clinicians are prioritising comprehensive, safe care over convenience alone.

That said, the experience shouldn't be frustrating or confusing. The best online clinics combine quick booking systems with thoughtful *telehealth escalation pathways*, clear explanations, and easy access to real people who can help every step of the way.

Next time an online clinic says you require an in-person assessment referral, remember it's about getting the right care in the right setting — and you should feel confident that the process will be clear, supported, and centred on your needs.

Have you had to move from an online clinic to an in-person appointment? How was your experience? Share your story and tips in the comments below.