

Ontario eConsult Program

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

eConsult, a secure web-based tool, enables physicians and nurse practitioners to ask clinical questions to a specialist electronically and receive a response within days, often eliminating the need for an in-person visit.

What is the Ontario eConsult Program?

The Ontario eConsult Program, with the support of the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, integrates two successful initiatives: BASE™ Managed Specialty model and the Ontario Telemedicine Network's (OTN) Direct to Specialist model. The program includes 4 services: Champlain BASE™ regional service, Ontario eConsult service, Teledermatology and Teleophthamology.



How is an eConsult different from an informal consultation?

In many organized care settings, when a Primary Care Provider (PCP) has a question about a patient, they are able to approach a colleague and ask for advice. These "hallway conversations" happen frequently and though the requesting provider often gets the advice needed, there is no formal documentation of the consultation. There is also no way for the specialist or provider to get paid.

What are the benefits of eConsult to physicians and nurse practitioners?

- Provides timely access to non-urgent questions (average response time 2 days)
- Improves care coordination and collaboration between clinicians
- Provides opportunities to enhance learning and manage patient cases at the family practice level, where patient trust is often highest

Who are the specialists providing advice? Are they from my region?

At present, the specialists providing advice are located across Ontario. The BASE™ managed service on the OTNhub offers access to over 70 specialty groups, including dermatology, psychiatry, endocrinology, cardiology, hematology and pediatrics. Expanding the eConsult program is a key priority for the eConsult Centre of Excellence and the HITS eHealth Office, a division of Hamilton Health Sciences and the HNHB LHIN delivery partner. This includes identifying specialists and specialty groups that would further enhance the value of eConsult to the requesting providers.

Do you need to obtain your patient's consent prior to requesting an eConsult and who is the Most Responsible Provider (MRP) during an eConsult?

Patient consent is implied in an eConsult as this interaction remains within the circle of care; however, advising your patient of your use of this tool is good practice. When using the eConsult service, the PCP remains the MRP for the patient, i.e., when a specialist accepts an eConsult, it does not transfer the responsibility of care or decision making to the specialist as may be the case with a traditional referral.

How are family physicians, nurse practitioners and specialists compensated for using eConsult?

Services that are part of the Ontario eConsult Program are available at no cost to the patient and the provider. Where applicable, family physicians can bill OHIP for the consult request using the K738 fee code (Ontario Schedule of Benefits). A K738 Clarification Guide has been published by the Ontario Medical Association Economics Department to assist physicians in correctly using the code. Specialists providing services on eConsult are paid an hourly rate of \$200, pro-rated based on the length of time it takes to complete an eConsult.

Contact Us

To learn more about eConsult and how to sign up, please contact the HITS eHealth Office by phone: 905-521-2100 x44990 or e-mail: eConsult@HITSeHealth.ca