

Guidelines for choosing a corporate virtual care provider



How to choose the right virtual care provider for your employees

In the past year, virtual care's growth has accelerated considerably in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, virtual care is now an integral part of the Canadian healthcare landscape.

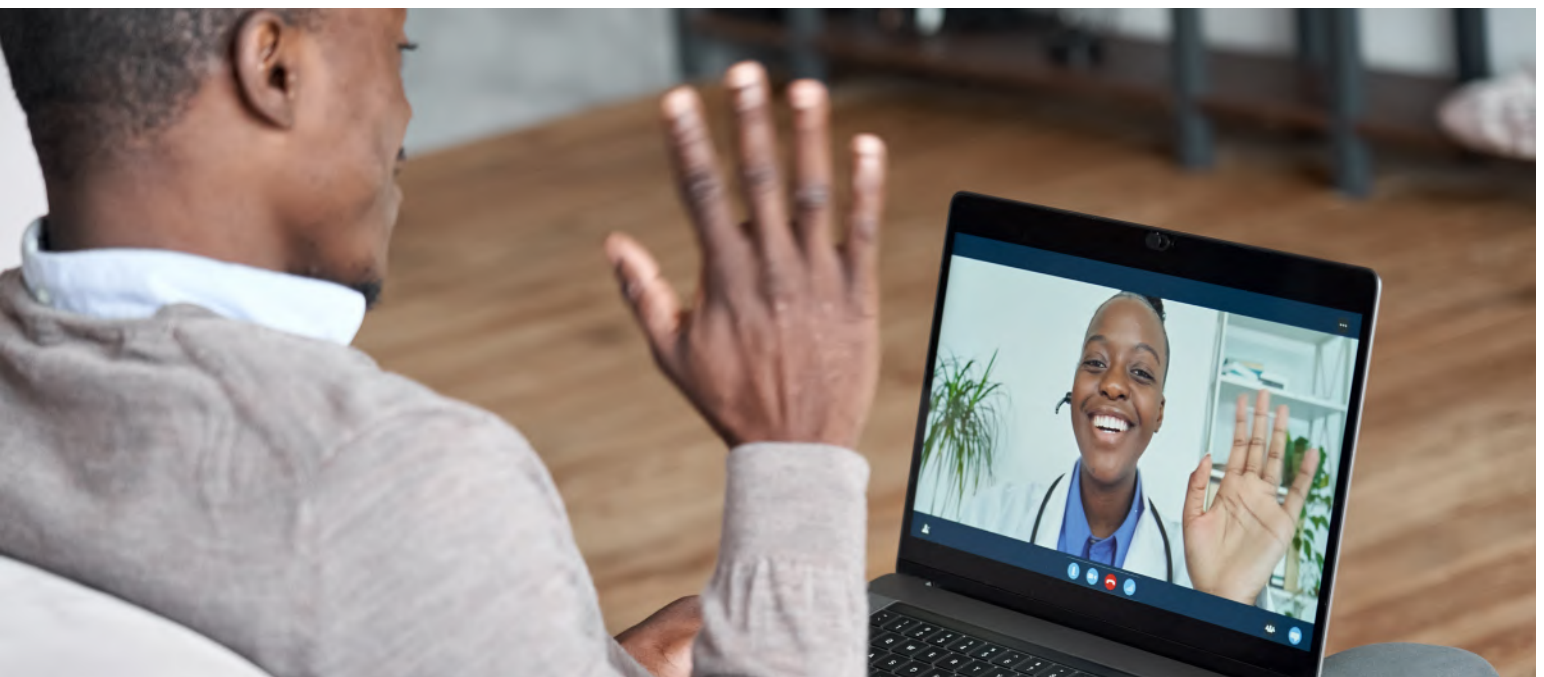
A study published by the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) confirms that primary care saw large shifts from in-person consultations to virtual care over the first four months of the COVID-19 pandemic, with virtual care visits comprising 71% of primary care physician visits. Many of these patients were using virtual care for the first time, and more than 90% said they were "very satisfied" with the experience.

Innovation leaders predict that virtual care will streamline the patient experience in the same way ATMs disrupted bank tellers. Travelling to a clinic and spending hours in a waiting room for non-urgent health issues may soon be a thing of the past.

To help Canadians access the healthcare they need, organizations and businesses are searching for virtual care providers that provide exceptional patient experience, reliable outcomes and physician access, and have the ability to scale. Since the start of 2020, several new providers have entered the virtual care marketplace to offer services to the

many Canadians staying at home to avoid potential exposure to COVID-19. These providers all vary greatly in terms of their service model, wait times for patients, experience, and ability to scale, among other traits.

The success and impact of any corporate virtual care provider hinges on their patient experience and ability to provide a comprehensive care journey, with complete medical records and continuity of care to facilitate collaboration between different healthcare specialists. Patients want low wait times and a simple, complete, easy-to-use platform that's always there for them. If the virtual care provider you choose doesn't provide a meaningful tool to your employees that can truly support their health and wellness, you risk your investment becoming a failed, costly experiment.



Our company was founded by a practising physician who wanted to make healthcare more streamlined, patient-centric, and easily accessible. Six years later, Maple is a leader in the Canadian healthcare landscape precisely because of our quality of care, personalized, whole-person approach to health, physician leadership, roots in the healthcare sector, and technological achievements. Our unique doctor-led model allows us to provide incredibly fast access to care and our superior technology powers new models of delivery that transform and reinvent healthcare.

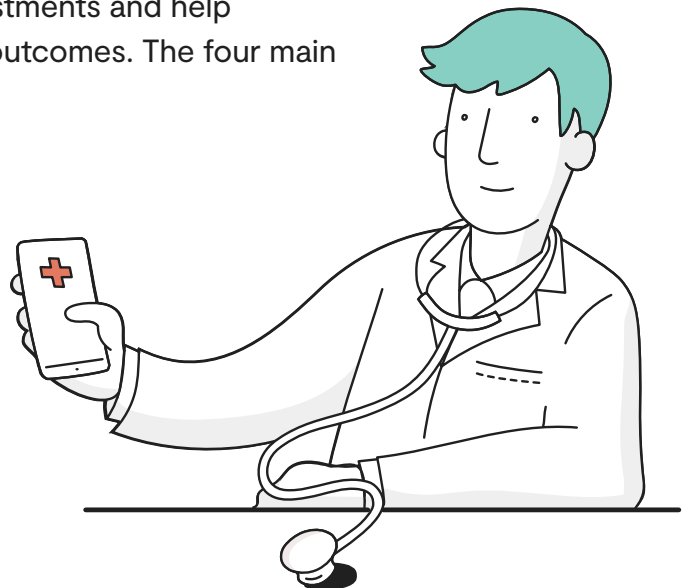
With the rapid rise of virtual care, insurers and employers are taking interest in providing this service to their policyholders and staff. Virtual care is a benefit that Canadians truly value and appreciate, as it's a highly convenient service that allows them to resolve health issues quickly. For businesses, offering virtual care to their team allows them to create a culture of health and well-being and show their employees that their happiness and safety matter.

IN ADDITION TO IMPROVING EMPLOYEES' HEALTH, VIRTUAL CARE ALSO PROVIDES MANY OTHER BENEFITS FOR BUSINESSES, INCLUDING:

- Employees can resolve health issues on their own schedule, outside of business hours. This results in fewer days taken off work.
- Virtual care improves the success metrics of other company wellness programs by helping employees partake in more preventative care.
- Employees with chronic conditions can see doctors more easily for ongoing checkups. This helps reduce the likelihood of extended leaves of absence for sickness or disability.
- Mental health challenges increasingly cause employees to take time off work, or leave jobs altogether. Mental health services provided through virtual care can provide crucial support to employees and help improve their outcomes.
- A quality virtual care service offers family features to help support employees who are responsible for children or dependants. Caretakers can talk to a doctor at any hour to address an unexpected health issue.
- Virtual care improves engagement and productivity at work by helping employees resolve health issues faster. It can also strengthen your existing health benefits package to help you attract new talents, or retain your current team.

With so many different virtual care providers in the marketplace, it can be confusing to evaluate which vendor best fits your organization's needs. We created this resource to help Canadian employers make smarter decisions about their virtual care investments and help improve access to care and employee health outcomes. The four main criteria for evaluating a virtual care vendor are:

1. Platform features
2. Patient experience
3. Model of care
4. Vendor attributes





Platform features and patient experience

PLATFORM FEATURES

Hours of physician access

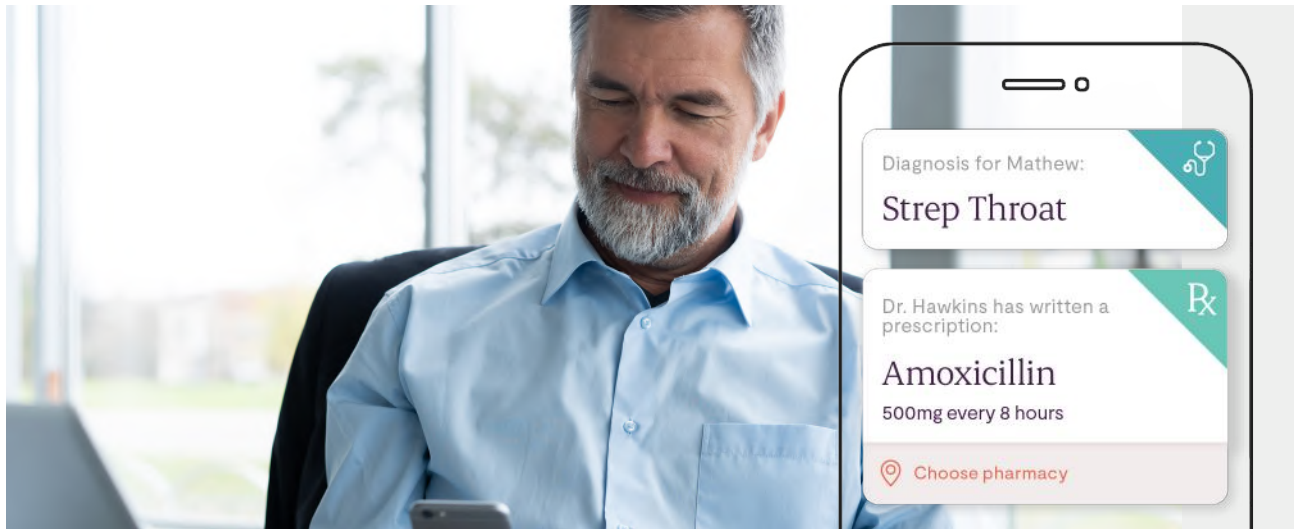
Can employees request a doctor's visit at any time, day or night? Or, are there set hours of doctor availability? Illness doesn't occur on a schedule, which is why patients on Maple can talk to a doctor on-demand in a few minutes, 24/7.

Medical record-keeping

Virtual care platforms must integrate into Canada's broader healthcare network in order to scale and provide true benefits to patients. Does the virtual care platform you're considering keep comprehensive medical records of each patient visit to ensure continuity of care? Are these records stored in an easily accessible location within a patient's profile? These are core features of the Maple platform that allow patients to retain complete control of their personal health information at all times.

Prescriptions

Many patients request virtual doctor visits in order to obtain or renew a prescription, so you should make sure that the virtual care platform you're considering allows patients to receive prescriptions. Doctors on Maple can write prescriptions for many health issues. Patients can then pick up their prescription the same day at a pharmacy near them, or have it delivered directly to their door.



Requisitions

Does the platform you're considering allow doctors to order tests for their patients? Can patients easily download their test requisition forms? Commonly-ordered tests include blood work, diagnostic imaging, allergy testing, and cardiovascular tests, all of which can be provided to patients by doctors on Maple.

Doctor's notes

Does the platform you're considering allow doctors to write notes for their patients to exempt them from work or school? Can patients easily download these notes? Doctors on Maple can also provide these to patients, should they deem it medically necessary.

User flow

Is the platform intuitive? Can patients open the app and see a doctor quickly? Is the platform glitchy, or does it crash periodically? Maple offers a high-quality, seamless, easy-to-use platform that allows patients to see healthcare providers quickly from a phone, tablet, or computer.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- During what hours can employees see a doctor?
- Does the platform automatically update patient medical records after each visit?
- Can patients receive prescriptions, requisitions, and doctor's notes online?
- How many steps, or clicks, does it take from logging on to starting a doctor's visit?



PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Access, speed, quality of care

There is a wide range of wait times to see a doctor between virtual care providers. In terms of patient experience, how long do they need to wait before seeing a doctor for a current medical issue? Minutes, hours, or days?

Maple patients typically connect with a doctor in under five minutes — the industry-leading wait time.

Communication options

Can patients speak with a doctor over phone call, text, or video call? For some conditions, video call is a must as doctors need to be able to visually inspect their patient. Texting and audio-only options are better for patients who are not as comfortable with technology, or who prefer not to appear on video.

Personalized care

Can patients use the platform to receive comprehensive care and meaningful, personalized support? Do employees use the platform as part of their lives, or only when they're sick? Look for a virtual care platform that can provide a personalized care journey for each employee by getting to know them at their own pace, such as by leveraging the patient intake process to deliver custom experiences.

Continuity of care

Continuity of care means continuity for the patient from one appointment to the next and comprehensive, always up-to-date medical records that can facilitate collaboration between healthcare providers in different fields. Seek a virtual care platform that can provide whole-person care to address patients' physical and mental health needs and that maintains robust, shareable medical records.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- How long are patient wait times?
- Can patients choose text, video, or audio?
- Can medical records be shared outside of the platform?





Care model and vendor attributes

VIRTUAL CARE MODEL

Care models represent the systems that virtual care providers use to connect patients with doctors. The three main virtual care models are:

1. **Direct connection:** Using the “Uber” model, patients request a visit and are instantly matched with the next available doctor.
2. **Triage:** Patients request an appointment and their case is reviewed by a nurse or customer support agent. Then, the patient is transferred to a healthcare provider or educational resources.
3. **Booked appointments:** Patients book an appointment with a doctor for a future date and time.

Care model employed

When evaluating a virtual care provider, ask the vendor which care model their platform relies on. In general, on-demand doctor’s visits are more convenient and reliable. Booking an appointment hours or days in advance is less helpful for treating more urgent medical issues.

Connection to medical doctors

Prescriptions, requisitions, and sick notes can only be provided by medical doctors. To save on costs, some virtual care providers send patients to nurses instead. Nurses are terrific for health counselling and supervising patients recovering from chronic illness or intensive procedures. However, nurses cannot offer the same breadth of medical services or treatment as licensed medical doctors.



Specialists

Can patients only see one type of doctor, like a general practitioner, or can they also schedule appointments with specialized medical professionals, such as dermatologists, lactation consultants, endocrinologists, naturopaths, or allergists? Virtual care is an exciting opportunity for specialist providers, as it cuts patient wait times to under 24 hours.

Mental health therapists

Employee mental health plays an enormous role in their well-being and the overall culture of your workplace. Does the virtual care provider you're considering offer online therapy? Do they propose different types of mental health therapists, such as psychotherapists and psychiatrists?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Do patients see medical doctors every time?
- Can patients see specialists in addition to general practitioners?
- Can patients access mental health therapy over the platform?



Vendor attributes

Industry longevity

A company's longevity, especially if the industry they operate in is young and evolving, is one of the best indicators of trustworthiness. Look for virtual care providers who have been in operation for several years. If they've only popped up around the time COVID-19 started, there's a strong chance that they're motivated by a quick payday instead of patient well-being.

Platform security

Patient health information (PHI) is vitally important to protect. When considering a virtual care platform, look for the following:



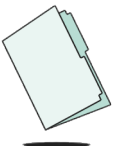
SOC2 compliance



256-bit AES encryption technology



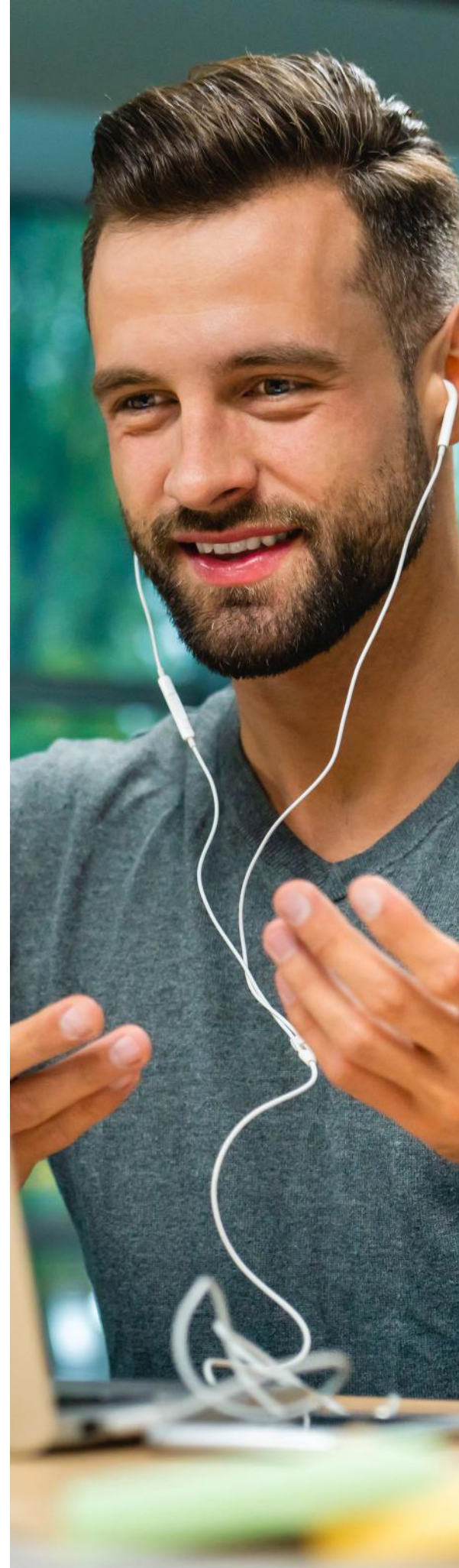
Frequent quality assurance testing schedule



A transparent privacy policy



Two-factor patient login authentication





Accessibility

Make sure that people of all abilities, including people who are blind, deaf, or have physical or cognitive challenges, can use the virtual care platform you're considering. Has the platform gone through extensive accessibility testing? Does it meet the needs of all your employees?

Customer support

Can patients contact a live customer support agent at any time? It can be frustrating to experience technical difficulties when you're sick and in need of care. Customer support channels should be easy to find, responsive, friendly, and committed to resolving patient issues.

Innovative outlook

Is the virtual care provider you're considering an industry trendsetter? Is it actively pioneering new features to innovate in the field of virtual care? Or is the technology it's offering fairly standard?

Track record

Take a look at patient reviews of different virtual care platforms on the App Store, Google Play, Google Business, social media sites, and wherever else you can find unfiltered feedback. Moreover, make sure to ask virtual care providers for their patient resolution rate. This is the rate, in percentage points, of patients who were able to resolve their health concern after one doctor's visit.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- How long has a provider been in the industry?
- What are the platform security specs?
- Is the platform accessible for people of all abilities?
- Is live customer support available at any time?
- Is this provider improving the virtual care landscape?
- What is the provider's patient resolution rate?

Questions to ask virtual care providers

If you're in conversation with any virtual care provider, be sure to ask the following questions:

WHAT FEATURES DOES YOUR PLATFORM OFFER?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 24/7 on-demand doctors | <input type="checkbox"/> Prescriptions delivery and same-day pickup | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor's notes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical record-keeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Requisitions | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health support |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Resource library |

WHICH COMMUNICATION OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Text | <input type="checkbox"/> Audio | <input type="checkbox"/> Video |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|

WHAT CARE MODEL DOES YOUR PLATFORM USE?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct connection with a doctor | <input type="checkbox"/> Triage via a nurse or care navigator | <input type="checkbox"/> Booked appointments |
|--|---|--|

WHAT SPECIALIST OPTIONS DOES YOUR PLATFORM PROPOSE?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Specialist referrals | <input type="checkbox"/> Other specialists, such as dermatology, endocrinologists, and more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health therapists | |

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How many years have you been in operation?
- What security measures do you take to protect patient health information (PHI)?
- Which accessibility features are built into your platform?
- Have you brought anything new to the Canadian virtual care landscape?
- What is your patient resolution rate?



Looking to implement virtual care for your employees? We can help. To learn more about our virtual care options, contact us at sales@getmaple.ca or visit getmaple.ca/business