Covid-19: remote consultations
A quick guide to assessing patients by video or voice call

**Clinical characteristics**
Based on 1099 hospitalised patients in Wuhan, China

- **69%** Cough
- **22%** Temperature >38°C
- **22%** Temperature 37.5–38°C
- **38%** Fatigue
- **34%** Sputum
- **19%** Shortness of breath
- **15%** Muscle aches
- **14%** Sore throat
- **14%** Headache
- **12%** Chills
- **5%** Nasal congestion
- **5%** Nausea or vomiting
- **4%** Diarrhoea
- **24%** Any comorbidity

**Red flags**
- Severe shortness of breath at rest
- Difficulty breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest
- Cold, clammy, or pale and mottled skin
- New confusion
- Becoming difficult to rouse
- Blue lips or face
- Little or no urine output
- Coughing up blood
- Other conditions, such as:
  - Neck stiffness
  - Non-blanching rash

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**1 Set up**
Prepare yourself and decide how to connect
- Have current ‘stay at home’ covid-19 guidance on hand

**2 Connect**
Make video link if possible, otherwise call on the phone
- Check video and audio
- Can you hear/see me?

**3 Get started**
Quickly assess whether sick or less sick
- **Rapid assessment**
  - If they sound or look very sick, such as too breathless to talk, go direct to key clinical questions
  - **Establish what the patient wants** out of the consultation, such as:
    - Clinical assessment
    - Reassurance
    - Advice on self isolation

**4 History**
Adapt questions to patient's own medical history
- **Contacts**
  - Close contact with known covid-19 case
  - Immediate family member unwell
  - Occupational risk group
- **History of current illness**
  - Date of first symptoms

**5 Examination**
Assess physical and mental function as best as you can
- **Over phone, ask carer or patient to describe:**
  - State of breathing
  - Colour of face and lips
- **Over video, look for:**
  - General demeanour
  - Skin colour

**6 Decision and action**
Advise and arrange follow-up, taking account of local capacity
- **Which pneumonia patients to send to hospital?**
  - **Clinical concern, such as:**
    - Temperature > 38°C
    - Respiratory rate > 20
    - Heart rate > 100 with new confusion
    - Oxygen saturation < 94%
  - **Self management:** fluids, paracetamol
  - **Reduce spread of virus:** follow current government 'stay at home' advice

- **Likely covid-19, well, with mild symptoms**
  - **Arrange follow up by video. Monitor closely if you suspect pneumonia**

- **Likely covid-19, unwell, deteriorating**
  - **Proactive, whole patient care**
  - **Ambulance protocol (999)**

- **Safety netting**
  - If living alone, someone to check on them
  - **Maintain fluid intake - 6 to 8 glasses per day**

- **Unwell and needs admission**
  - **Seek immediate medical help for red flag symptoms**

**Likely covid-19 but well, with mild symptoms**

**Likely covid-19, unwell, deteriorating**

**Relevant comorbidities**

**Unwell and needs admission**

**Seek immediate medical help for red flag symptoms**

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* Breaths per minute † Beats per minute ‡ If oximetry available for self monitoring

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