

Email Guidelines for Patients

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Email is a widely accepted form of communication. While it cannot replace personal encounters between you and your doctor, email can be a convenient way to exchange information. This guideline outlines when, why, and how you may use email to correspond with this medical practice.

EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Use this email format

Email Subject Heading – Use the subject headings below, along with your first and last name (e.g., "Prescription refill, MaryJames").

One subject – Do not discuss more than one subject in an email.

Plain language – Use the same language you would use when talking to the doctor. Describe your question as fully as possible (e.g., "I'm going to see the specialist about the trouble I have swallowing and I don't know whether it is okay for me to have anything to eat before my appointment.")

Length – Email should not exceed 250 words.

Attachments – Do not send attachments (e.g., photos, documents) unless your doctor tells you this is acceptable.

Web links – Unless requested by the doctor, do not send links to Web sites.

2. ONLY use email for these approved uses Approved Uses for Email – Administrative Email Subject Heading

Approved Uses for Email – Administrative

Email Subject Heading

Schedule, cancel or rebook appointments.

Appointment with [insert doctor's name]

Be notified or reminded about referrals.

Referral appointment

Make follow-up appointments after a medical procedure or test.

Follow-up appointment

Get directions to our office, or to a medical/diagnostic facility to which we have referred you.

Directions needed

Update your personal contact information (e.g., telephone, address).

Update contact information

Pay for an uninsured service.

Paying for uninsured service

Get information about office policies and protocols (e.g., privacy policy, uninsured billing, completing forms for third parties such as insurance companies or Workers' compensation).

Inquiry about practice policy

Approved Uses for Email – Medical

Email Subject Heading

Request prescription refills

Prescription refill

Clarify or confirm your doctor's instructions

Clarification needed

Receive test results, if deemed appropriate by your doctor

Test results

Learn how to prepare for tests and procedures (e.g., fasting prior to blood work, not wearing deodorant prior to a mammogram)

Preparing for upcoming test/procedure

Ask questions prior to a medical procedure

Question about upcoming procedure

Get post-procedure instructions

Question about procedure already done

Ask questions about a condition you have already discussed with your doctor in person

Question related to recent appointment

Ask questions about a new condition or symptom

New condition / symptom

Provide basic medical history to be reviewed at your next appointment, only if requested by your doctor

Medical history, as requested

3. Do NOT use email for any of the following

- In emergencies or when information is needed urgently
- As a substitute for an appointment with your doctor
- Requesting a diagnosis based on a written description of symptoms
- Requesting a new prescription or medication
- Requesting medical advice or information for anyone other than yourself
- Exchanging sensitive medical information (unless you are using secure email messaging)
- Complex medical issues
- When you are not in your home province where your doctor is licensed to practice (e.g., when you are travelling or living temporarily in another province or country)
- Sending Web site links for your doctor to comment on (unless requested by your doctor)
- Lengthy correspondence (greater than 250 words)
- Any frivolous or commercial purpose
- Any purpose not specifically approved by your doctor

Replies to Patient Email

All email will be acknowledged in a timely fashion. However, we do not monitor email when the practice is closed for weekends, evenings, statutory holidays, and vacations. Please consider our office hours when you are waiting for a reply to your email.

As a general rule, we will respond to patient email **within 72 hours**. If you do not receive a response within the designated time period, please call the office to follow up.

If your inquiry is urgent, please telephone 416-929-0834 for an appointment.

Email from this medical practice

This medical practice may use email to send you health promotion messages, public health alerts, drug recalls, guidance about health-related Web sites, links to approved Web sites, links to online tools for self-assessment and self-help, information about support resources in the community, or basic information about an office visit or referral procedure.

Privacy, confidentiality and information security

Email communication is restricted to patients of this medical practice. Please ensure that you are using the email address that has been provided by this medical practice; we are not responsible for emails sent to the wrong email address.

When communicating with this medical practice by email, you are strongly advised to use your own personal computer, and to use an email address that is password-protected and that only you can access (e.g., not at work).

It may be necessary for office staff or other physicians filling in for your doctor to access email from patients in the course of their duties. Be assured that they will respect your privacy and will keep your personal information confidential.

If you are uncomfortable in any way about communicating electronically with this medical practice, please call for an in-office appointment.

Acknowledgement and consent

I understand and agree that:

- Email is not a substitute for a personal appointment with my doctor.
- Email is not to be used in emergencies, or when I need information or advice urgently.
- Email will only be used for the approved purposes specified above.
- Email may be accessed by medical office staff in the course of their duties.
- Email may be accessed by my doctor's medical colleagues while caring for me when my doctor is absent.
- Email will be restricted to single or simple medical issues.
- Regular email will not be used to exchange sensitive information.
- Email will follow the Email Format outlined above.
- Email will use respectful language.
- Email will not be used for frivolous, commercial or unapproved purposes.
- Email between me and this medical practice will become part of my confidential patient record.
- Email is an uninsured service for which I may have to pay the doctor's office.
- This medical practice may use email to send me drug alerts, health promotion material, and other educational resources.
- Email is a privilege that may be withdrawn if I fail to abide by the terms and conditions of use.