

Patient Email Consent Form

Email is a widely accepted form of communication. While it cannot replace personal encounters between you and your health care provider, email can be a convenient way to exchange information. The guideline outlines when, why, and how you may use email to correspond with The Centre for Family Medicine Family Health Team (CFFM FHT).

EMAIL INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Use this email format

Email Subject Heading – Use the subject headings below, along with your first and last name (e.g., “Address needed”).

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

Plain language – Use the same language you would use when talking to your health care provider. 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 requested by your health care provider.

Web links – Unless requested by the health care provider, do not send links to web sites.

2. Only use email for these approved uses

Approved ADMINISTRATIVE uses	Email Subject Heading
Be notified or reminded about referrals	Referral appointment
Get the address of our office, or to a medical / diagnostic facility to which we have referred you	Address needed
Update your contact information (e.g., telephone, address)	Update contact information
Get information about office policies and protocols (e.g. third party forms, uninsured billing)	Inquiry about practice policy
Approved MEDICAL uses	Email Subject Heading
Clarify or confirm your health care provider's instructions	Clarification needed

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 health care provider.
- 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.
- Complex medical issues.
- When you are not in our home province where your health care provider is licensed to practice (e.g., when you are travelling or living temporarily in another province or country).
- Sending web site links for your health care provider to comment on (unless requested by your health care provider).
- Lengthy correspondence (greater than 250 words).
- Any frivolous or commercial purpose.
- Any purpose not specifically approved by your health care provider.
- Any issue outside the context of the patient-health care provider relationship.

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4. Replies to Patient Email

All emails 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 3 business** days. If you do not receive a response within the designated time period, please assume that your email was not received and call the office to follow up.

If your inquiry is urgent, please telephone the clinic for an appointment.

5. 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 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. This information is for general purposes only and should not be perceived as the medical advice of a physician.

6. Privacy, Confidentiality and Information Security

a) Our Commitment to You

The Centre for Family Medicine is committed to follow the Privacy and Security guidelines as mandated by Law in the PHIPA (2004).

All forms of Personal Information shared with your health care team are kept in confidence and used solely for the provision of health care.

The Centre for Family Medicine will not release any contact information (address, phone or email) to a third party unless it is directly related to the provision of your health care or mandated by Law.

When providing general information to more than one email recipient at the same time, the Centre for Family Medicine will protect your privacy by sending the message using blind copies (Bcc).

For detailed information regarding how we conform to PHIPA and protect your privacy please review our full Privacy Policy found on our public website (www.family-medicine.ca).

b) Patient Commitment

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.

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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). You are responsible for preventing unauthorized access to your email address. If you provided an email address to this medical practice you are responsible for ensuring that it is correct.

I agree not to add The Centre For Family email address to any group mailing list.

Email communication is an insecure, unencrypted method of communication and you agree not to hold the Centre for Family Medicine FHT responsible for the risks associated with email use including, but not limited to, security breaches and improper disclosure of confidential information.

It may be necessary for office staff or other physicians filling in for your health care provider 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.

7. Acknowledgement and Consent

I understand and agree that:

- Email is not a substitute for a personal appointment with my health care provider.
- 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 health care provider's medical colleagues while caring for me when my health care provider 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.
- This medical practice may use email to send me drug alerts, health promotion material, and other educational resource.
- Email is a privilege that may be withdrawn if I fail to abide by the terms and conditions of use.
- I have all my questions regarding this guideline answered.
- My email may become part of my medical record.
- Email communication is only for residents of Ontario and is governed by the laws of the Province of Ontario.

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- Email is easier to falsify than handwritten or signed hard copies. In addition, it is impossible to verify the true identity of the sender, or to ensure that only the recipient can read the email once it has been sent.
- Email can introduce viruses into a computer system and potentially damage or disrupt the computer.
- Email can be forwarded, intercepted, circulated, stored or even changed without the knowledge or permission of the physician or the patient. Email senders can easily misaddress an email, resulting in it being sent to many unintended and unknown recipients. Email is indelible. Even after the sender and recipient have deleted their copies of the email, back up copies may exist on a computer or in cyberspace.
- Use of email to discuss sensitive information can increase the risk of such information being disclosed to third parties.
- Emails may be forwarded internally to staff and to those involved, as necessary, for diagnosis, treatment, reimbursement, health care operations and other handling.
- Email communication is not an appropriate substitute for clinical examinations. The patient is responsible for following up on the physician's email and for scheduling appointments where warranted.
- I should not use email for communication regarding sensitive medical information, such as sexually transmitted disease, AIDS/HIV, mental health, developmental disability, or substance abuse unless I have specifically asked for this information or release of my entire medical chart. Similarly, the physician will not discuss such matters over email unless I have specifically asked for this information or release of my entire medical chart.
- The Centre for Family Medicine FHT is not responsible for information loss due to technical failures.
- I must inform the Centre for Family Medicine FHT of any change in email address
- I acknowledge CFFM's right to, upon provision of written or email notice, withdraw the option of communicating through email.

Please complete consent form on page 6.

Acknowledgement and Consent

Patient Name:

Patient Email (please print clearly): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Patient or Substitute Decision Maker)

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____

Children – 13 years old and under

Relationship to patient: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Patient or Substitute Decision Maker)

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____