



Important Information About Patient Email

As a patient at Columbia University Medical Center, you may request we communicate with you by electronic mail (email). This Fact Sheet will inform you about the risks of communicating with your health care provider or program via email and how Columbia University Medical Center will use and disclose provider / patient email.

PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY

Email communications are two-way communications. However, responses and replies to emails sent to or received by either you or your health care provider may be hours or days apart. This means that there could be a delay in receiving treatment for an acute condition.

If you have an urgent or an emergency situation, you should not rely solely on provider / patient email to request assistance or to describe the urgent or emergency situation. Instead, you should act as though provider / patient email is not available to you - and seek assistance by means consistent with your needs.

Email messages on your computer, your laptop, and / or your phone have inherent privacy risks – especially when your email access is provided through your employer or when access to your email messages is not password protected.

Unencrypted email provides as much privacy as a postcard. You should not communicate any information with your health care provider that you would not want to be included on a postcard that is sent through the Post Office.

Email messages may be inadvertently missed. To minimize this risk, Columbia University Medical Center requires you respond appropriately to a test email message before we will allow health information about you to be communicated via email. You can also help minimize this risk by using only the email address that you are provided at the successful conclusion of the testing period to communicate with your providers or program.

Email is sent at the touch of a button. Once sent, an email message cannot be recalled or cancelled. Errors in transmission, regardless of the sender's caution, can occur.

In order to forward or to process and respond to your email, individuals at Columbia University Medical Center other than your health care provider may read your email message. Your email message is not a private communication between you and your treating provider.

Neither you nor the person reading your email can see the facial expressions or gestures or hear the voice of the sender. Email can be misinterpreted.

At your health care provider's discretion, your email messages and any and all responses to them may become part of your medical record.