



E-mail Policy

Purpose: To provide a procedure for the appropriate use and handling of e-mail communications with patients.

Policy: To provide for patient satisfaction, when requested this office will communicate some forms of information via e-mail. This medium will be used with an eye towards medical and legal procedure.

Procedure:

1. E-mail communications will only be used with established patients.
2. Patients who elect to use e-mail must be advised of this office's e-mail policy and sign an informed consent (see attached):
3. A copy of the consent will be given to the patient and a copy filed in the patient medical record.
4. Automatic reply to all incoming messages will state:
"Your message has been received by Family Psychiatry of The Woodlands. I will attempt to process your request within one business day. If you need immediate assistance, please call the office.
5. ALL e-mail involving patients or written to patients must be filed in the patient's medical record.
6. Patient issues which are not discussed via e-mail are:
 - protected diagnosis such as psychiatric conditions
 - results of HIV testing
 - work-related injuries and disability
7. The patient liaison is responsible for checking and routing incoming e-mail on a daily basis.
8. When a patient request has been completed, the staff member responsible for completing that task will be responsible for sending a confirmation message to the patient.
9. As with any form of medical record documentation, unprofessional remarks or comments in e-mail communications are prohibited.
10. Confidentiality of patient information will be maintained at all times.
11. When sending sensitive patient information via e-mail, the sender is expected to double check all "to" fields before transmitting.
12. If sending group mailings, the blind cc feature must be used.
13. Outgoing messages will contain discreet subject headers and a banner at the top of each message stating "This is confidential medical communication."
14. Each desktop workstation will have a password protected screen saver.
15. Mail will be backed up daily onto our server.
16. The patient liaison will activate the out-of-office assistant any time the e-mail account will not be serviced by the staff or covering physicians during an absence that exceeds the established e-mail response time.