

**Provider to Provider and/or Patient to Provider Email
Communications Fact Sheet**

The following questions and answers are guidelines for using email as a method of communication with healthcare providers at Nova Scotia Health.

What are my risks when communicating via email?

The security and confidentiality of email messages is not guaranteed. Unauthorized individuals may be able to access, read and possibly modify any email you send or are sent by Nova Scotia Health.

- Email may mistakenly be sent to wrong email address or to the wrong person.
- Employers may monitor email sent or received by their system, and by doing so may breach your privacy by inadvertently viewing personal health information
- Email can be used to spread viruses, some of which cause emails to be sent to others.
- Email can be mistakenly forwarded without your knowledge or consent
- If you share a device (phone or tablet) or email address, the person you share with may be able to see your information
Shared family email accounts can jeopardize confidentiality
- Back-up copies of email may exist even after you or the health care provider has deleted it.
- The sender may not confirm the identity of the person / number before sending the text message

When is it “okay” for me to use email?

Email should only be used for non-urgent issues such as routine inquiries or appointment information. **Never** rely on email for communication of serious, urgent, time-critical medical issues because email may be delayed or your care provider may not be able to read it soon enough. We do not advise using email when discussing sensitive medical information.

If you decide to use email, please indicate on the consent form if there are certain types of information you do not want to be discussed via email. NSH will never ask for payment information (credit card information), insurance information, social security or computer passwords via email.

How Should I Format an Email?

- Type “CONFIDENTIAL” and the reason for the communication in the subject line (e.g. “CONFIDENTIAL – Appointment”)
- State your message simply and include the following:
 - Your full name
 - Date of birth
 - Health card number and/or provincial insurance number
 - Address
 - Telephone number (where we can reach you)

How Soon Will I Hear Back from My Care Provider Using Email?

Healthcare providers will do their best to respond to email communications in a timely manner. If you do not hear back within a few days, please contact your healthcare provider via phone.

How will the Information in my emails be used?

The information within your text message will primarily be used to answer your question(s) or provide the information you are requesting. Your text information may be shared with other healthcare providers who are part of your care team. NSH will not share emails with third parties not involved in your care without your prior written consent, except as authorized or required by the Personal Health Information Act (PHIA). Please keep in mind all emails, sent or received, may become part of your health record.

What Should I Do if I Change My Email Address?

You must notify your healthcare provider as soon as possible to make sure that your information is not sent to the wrong person. You will be required to complete and resubmit a new Patient/Client Consent for Use of Email Form.