

Email Policy

The **Ottawa Valley Family Health Team** (OVFHT) communicates with patients in several different ways. Email is one option but telephone and postal service communication are used as a default should an email address not be provided or is rendered “inactive”.

Email communication has many advantages. It allows for timely communication of important information in a way that remains clear and easy to access. It provides a written record that can be referred to as needed. Emails are cost effective, can be sent at any time of the day or night, and people don't need to be present to receive the email.

OVFHT uses email communication to share information we think may be helpful to you. This includes appointment reminders, changes to hours of operation, updates on programs and services, health promotion and some patient care topics. Please note that we have safeguards to protect your personal health information from theft, loss, unauthorized access, copying, modification, use, disclosure and disposal.

Although we recognize that some of our patients would like to email their OVFHT provider directly, we are unable to offer this service at this time. If you would like to communicate with your provider or any member of your health care team, we ask that you call our clinic's main phone number ([613-256-9370 ext. 1](tel:613-256-9370)). Our reception staff will book the appropriate appointment with your provider.

While email communication has many advantages, it also comes with a few risks that we want to be sure you are aware of. Please review the following information carefully – we would like to be sure that you understand and accept these risks before agreeing to keep your email address on your file:

- Email communication is not considered to be private or secure.
- Your employer may choose to monitor or store emails that pass through their system.
- 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.
- Any email you receive could potentially introduce a virus into a computer system, and potentially damage or disrupt the computer.
- Emails can be forwarded, intercepted, circulated, stored or even changed without the knowledge or permission of the physician or the patient.
- An email sender could misaddress an email, resulting in it being sent to an unintended and unknown recipient.
- 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.

To mitigate some of these risks, both parties assume the following responsibilities:

OVFHT Responsibilities

As an organization, we are committed to respecting the guidelines set out by [Personal Health Information Privacy Act](#) (PHIPA). All OVFHT employees and providers have signed and are bound by the clinic's privacy policy, which outlines the absolute confidentiality of patient information. As such, we take every measure to secure your privacy and do not use your email address for any reason that has not been outlined above. We use the minimum necessary amount of personal health information when communicating information to you.

In practice, the clinic requires that patients verify their demographic information, which includes email addresses, at every visit to confirm accuracy.

All patient emails are stored on our EMR platform, which is securely *password-protected*. Communication between all electronic devices, used at the clinic, and the clinic's server are encrypted using "[Secure Socket Layer](#)" (SSL) protocols. **Firewalls are also used on our systems to prevent unauthorized access to our networks and to stop Spam, viruses, and other unwanted content before they reach our infrastructure and users.**

Patient Responsibilities

Please ensure that the email that you have provided us is private, and not accessed by anyone other than yourself. You should ensure that your email is protected with encryption software, or if you waive this encryption requirement, understand that this may increase the risk of your privacy being violated. Should you change your email address, please update OVFHT as soon as possible.

We thank you for the continued privilege of working together towards your health and wellness.

You are receiving this email because we have your email address on file. If you take no action, we will assume that you have read and fully understand this consent form and we will continue to use email as a tool for communication. Further, you understand the risks associated with the communication of email between OVFHT and yourself, and consent to the conditions outlined herein, as well as any other instructions that the physician may impose to communicate with patients by email. You acknowledge the right of OVFHT to, upon the provision of written notice, withdraw the option of communicating through email.

If you do not accept the risks associated with communication of email between OVFHT and yourself and do not wish to be communicated with via email, please call [613-256-9370 EXT. 1](tel:613-256-9370) and indicate that you do not consent to email communication and to remove your email address from your file. We will do so accordingly.