

Electronic Mail Policy

Branson Clinic, LLC

What is our purpose in offering e-mail correspondence to our patients?

To serve as a partial substitute for phone communication about **non**-sensitive and **non**-emergent issues of patient care with our established patients and to enhance communication, patient education, and both patient and provider satisfaction.

How do I get started using e-mail to correspond with my doctor?

1. You need to sign an informed consent form provided by our office
2. Read our entire Personal Online Patient Policy
3. Read the article by Daniel Z. Sands, MD, MPH called "How To Communicate With Your Doctor Using Email"
4. When replying to an e-mail, always include the text from prior message(s) so there are no questions as to what was included in the preceding correspondence.

What are the issues when choosing which e-mail address to use to communicate with the doctor?

1. E-mail answers are sent to the e-mail address from which the question originated to help insure that incorrect e-mail address replies do not occur
2. When using a business e-mail address you should consider two things:
 - a. Check your company e-mail policy to see if it allows you to send and receive personal e-mails
 - b. If it does allow personal e-mail, understand that your employer generally has the legal right to monitor your e-mail

How secure is standard e-mail?

1. Unless e-mail is encrypted, it is always susceptible to unauthorized viewing (like a postcard vs. enveloped mail).
2. E-mail services like "hushmail.com" offer secure encrypted end-to-end communication if both parties use their service.

What should be the makeup of my e-mail (see questions below about (in)appropriate content)?

1. Category of your request (appointment, prescription, billing) in the Subject line
2. Non-sensitive and Non-emergent issues
3. Concise and precise description of your request or question
4. All previous text/correspondence if this is a reply to a previous message
5. Appropriate language and tone
6. Your contact information (name, phone number(s), etc.) and ID number (SS#, our Patient ID #)

Who reads my email?

1. The Doctor
2. Appropriate ancillary staff who have signed a workforce confidentiality agreement
3. Consulting Doctors (if necessary)

What are some examples of inappropriate questions to ask in an e-mail to our office?

1. Any Emergent or potentially critical questions or concerns – call or go to the emergency room as appropriate
2. Any questions or concerns in relation to highly sensitive information

3. Questions about a family member or someone that the doctor has not seen before face to face in our office
4. New prescription requests
5. Inquiries regarding symptoms, requests for diagnosis

What are some examples of appropriate questions to ask in my e-mail to our office?

1. Requesting, changing, or verifying an appointment time
2. To report vital signs (if requested to monitor them and report back)
3. Sending changes/updates to your name, address, insurance, etc.
4. Questions in which you believe are okay to be answered within one to two business days (usually same day)
5. Medication refill requests
6. Billing Questions
7. To inquire about office hours, location, staff credentials, billing and collection policies, services offered &/or health plans accepted

What do we do with the e-mails that you send to our office?

1. All e-mails that are related to your care are saved in your chart
2. The entire correspondence from beginning to end is included

Is there a charge for e-mail communication with our office?

1. As e-mail communication is only meant to be a mutual time-saving partial substitute for many questions normally asked over the phone, we have no charge for this service currently.
2. This policy is subject to change in the future as health care evolves, but prior notice will be issued.

What to do if you do not get a response to your email within the one to two business day time period?

1. Call our office at any time during business hours.
2. Check to make sure that you sent the e-mail.

What e-mail correspondence will our office send to you besides answers to your requests (if you concur)?

1. Appointment reminders
2. General questions about your address, insurance, or phone number changes
3. Notification of change in our office hours, location, billing and collection policies or health plans we've begun or stopped accepting
4. Announcements of new staff or new services we provide
5. Reminders to follow recommendations or schedule a follow-up appointment
6. Pre-procedure and post-procedure instructions (explanations & complications of the procedure)

Final Policy Information

Our office reserves the right to not correspond with patients who do not follow our e-mail policies. Additionally, our office reserves the right to refuse to respond online, after notification, to a patient that we believe needs to be seen in person. We will notify the patient via e-mail and telephone to inform the patient that we believe he/she needs to be seen in person. Our notifications and attempts to notify the patient of this recommendation will be recorded in the patients' medical chart.

Please ask our office / network administrator if you have any questions about what you have read.