



The following questions and answers are guidelines for utilizing email or text messaging as a method of communication with your healthcare provider.

What are my risks when using electronic communications?

- Electronic communication is not guaranteed to be secure or confidential.
- Unauthorized individuals may be able to intercept, read and possibly modify e-mail you send or are sent by Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA).
- Electronic communications may inadvertently be sent to wrong destinations or to the wrong individual.
- Employers may monitor email sent or received by employer-owned systems.
- Email can be used to spread viruses, some of which may cause unauthorized email distribution.
- Email can be forwarded without the authorization or detection of the source author.
- Shared family email accounts or cellular telephone plans can jeopardize confidentiality.

When is it okay for me to use electronic communications?

- Electronic communications should only be used for non-urgent issues such as routine enquiries or appointment information.
- Electronic means should **never** be used for communication of serious, urgent or time-critical medical issues like suffering from chest pain or severe low blood sugar levels. In those instances please visit your local emergency department, family physician or walk-in clinic.
- It is not advised to use electronic communications when sharing sensitive information such as sexually transmitted diseases, mental health problems, drug treatment or alcohol-related disorders.

How should I format an email?

- Type “CONFIDENTIAL” and the reason for the communication in the Subject line. Example: “Subject: CONFIDENTIAL – Medical Question”
- State your message simply and include the following:
 - your full name
 - telephone number (where the provider can reach you)

How should I format a text message?

- Limit communication to general statements or requests for contact.
Example: “I don’t know my next appointment date” or “Please make appointment for me.”
- Do not use abbreviations or emoticons as the meaning may be misunderstood.





How soon will I hear back from my provider?

- SHA healthcare providers will do their best to respond to electronic communications in a timely manner.
- If you do not hear back within a few days, telephone your SHA healthcare provider.

How will the information in my electronic communications be used?

- The information within your email or text message may be shared with other SHA healthcare providers on a need-to-know basis as part of your care team.
- SHA will not, however, share communications with third parties not involved with your care without your prior written consent, except as authorized or required by The Health Information Protection Act (HIPA).
- Keep in mind that all electronic communications, sent or received, may become part of your health record.

What should I do if I change my email address or cellular number?

- You must notify your SHA healthcare provider as soon as possible to maintain confidentiality.

TIP—Replying to a new email—Click REPLY:

- Instead of creating a new email, be sure to click REPLY when responding to an SHA email.
- Clicking REPLY establishes an email trail that allows you and your SHA healthcare provider to track messages, as well as eliminates the need for entering the return email address, therefore reducing chances of entering an address incorrectly.
- For your own records, you may want to save copies of messages sent and received within your email program.

****If you have any questions or concerns, contact your SHA healthcare provider****

