



EMAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

PLEASE NOTE THAT HIPAA, GDPR, AND CCPA ALL REQUIRE SENDERS TO GET CONSENT BEFORE EMAILING ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION.

As a patient of Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD, you may request that we communicate with via unencrypted electronic mail (email). Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD use HIPAA compliant email encryption software vendor Paubox as security mechanisms for secure email communications. This email provider supports sending TSL point-to-point encrypted emails to recipients who support encryption. While 90% of commercial email providers (like Google) are now encrypted, you will need to verify that your email provider and servers support encrypted email delivery to confirm that emails you send remain encrypted. Check with your email service provider if you are not sure.

Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD will make every effort to comply with your request to receive communications via email reasonably. However, Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD reserve the right to deny any request for email communications when it is determined that granting such a request would not be in best interest of the patient.

If you are experiencing an emergency, you should never rely on email communications and should seek immediate medical attention.

PLEASE READ THIS INFORMATION CAREFULLY

Risks associated with email communications

Transmitting patient information via email poses several risks, of which the patient should be aware. The patient should not agree to communicate via email without understanding and accepting the risk outlined.

The risks include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The privacy and security of email communication cannot be guaranteed.
- 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.
- Emails can introduce viruses into a computer system and potentially damage or disrupt the computer.
- Email can be forwarded, intercepted, circulated, stored, or even changed without the knowledge or permission of the physician or the patient. Email senders can easily misaddress an email, resulting in it being sent to many unintended and unknown recipients.
- The use of email to discuss sensitive information can increase the risk of such information being disclosed to third parties.
- Email can be used as evidence in court.

The Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of email information sent and received. However, because of the risks outlined above, Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of email communication. Thus, patients must consent to the use of email for patient information. Consent to the use of email includes an agreement with the following conditions:

- Emails to or from the patient concerning diagnosis or treatment may be printed in full and made part of the patient's medical record. Because they are part of the medical record, other individuals authorized to access the medical record, such as staff and billing personnel, may have access to those emails.
- Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD may forward emails internally to the physician's staff and to those involved, as necessary, for diagnosis, treatment, reimbursement, healthcare operations. Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD will not forward emails to independent third parties without the patient's prior written consent, except as authorized or required by law.
- Although Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD will endeavor to read and respond promptly to an email from the patient, Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD cannot guarantee that any particular email will be read and responded to within any specific time. Thus, the patient should not use email for medical emergencies or other time-sensitive matters.
- Email and portal communications are not an appropriate substitute for clinical examinations. The patient is responsible for following up on the physician's email and portal messages for scheduling appointments where warranted.
- If the patient's email requires or invites a response from the physician and the patient has not received a reply with a reasonable time period, it is the patient's responsibility to follow up to determine whether the intended recipient received the email and when the recipient will respond.
- The patient should not use email for communication regarding sensitive medical information, such as sexually transmitted disease, AIDS/HIV, mental health, developmental disability, or substance abuse. Similarly, the physician will not discuss such matters over email.
- The patient is responsible for informing Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD of any information the patient does not want to be sent by email, in addition to those set out in the bullet above.

Guidelines for communication by email:

- Limit or avoid using an employer's or other third party's computer.
- Inform Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD of any changes in the patient's email address.
- Review the email to make sure it is clear and that all relevant information is provided before sending it to the Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD.
- Withdraw consent only by written communication to Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD.
- Should the patient require immediate assistance, or if the patient's condition appears serious or rapidly worsens, the patient should not rely on email. Rather, the patient should call the physician's office for consultation or an appointment, visit the physician's office or take other measures as appropriate.
- The Southwest Gastroenterology P.C. and Southwest Endoscopy LTD. is not responsible for information loss due to technical failures associated with the patient's email software.