



Niagara Falls Community Health Centre

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Virtual Care & Communication Consent Form

Electronic communication is a widely accepted form of communication. While it cannot replace personal encounters between you and your health care provider, it can be a convenient way to exchange information. All electronic communication will be acknowledged in a timely fashion. However, we do not monitor when the office is closed for weekends, evenings, statutory holidays, and vacations. If you do not receive a response within five business days, please assume that your email or message was not received and call the Niagara Falls Community Health Centre (NFCHC) to follow up.

Niagara Falls Community Health Centre Commitment:

- Follow the privacy and security guidelines as mandated by law in the PHIPA (2004)
- All forms of personal information shared with your health care team are kept in confidence and used solely for the provision of health care
- The NFCHC will not release any contact information (address, phone, or email) to a third party unless it is directly related to the provision of your health care with your consent or mandated by law
- When providing general information to more than one electronic communication recipient at the same time, the NFCHC will protect your privacy by sending the message using blind copies (i.e. BCC)
- To protect your personal health information, we will not communicate with you via email to discuss personal health information, unless you have provided us with consent.

Electronic communication is not to be used:

- During emergencies, or when I need information or advice urgently.
- As a substitute for an in-person appointment with your health care provider.
- Requesting a diagnosis based on a written description of symptoms.
- Any frivolous, commercial, or unapproved purpose.
- During medical emergencies we expect you to call 911 or if it is an urgent request, we expect you to call the NFCHC directly.

Patient Acknowledgment and Agreement:

- I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the risks, limitations, conditions of use, and instructions for use of the selected electronic communication more fully described in the Appendix A to this consent form.
- I understand and accept the risks outlined in the Appendix A to this consent form, associated with the use of communicating electronically with the NFCHC staff.
- I consent to the conditions and will follow the instructions outlined in the Appendix A, as well as any other conditions that the NFCHC may impose when communicating electronically with patients.
- I acknowledge and understand that despite recommendations that encryption software be used as a security mechanism for electronic communications, it is possible that electronic communication with the NFCHC may not be encrypted (excluding OTN). Despite this, I agree to communicate with the NFCHC using electronic communication methods (as selected) with a full understanding of the risk.
- I acknowledge that either I or the NFCHC may, at any time, withdraw the option of communicating electronically upon providing written notice.
- Any questions I had have been answered.
- I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to alert the NFCHC when there has been a change in my email or phone.
- I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to alert the NFCHC when I no longer want to receive communication electronically.

Appendix A. Limitations and Use of Electronic Communication

- Electronic communication may be accessed by other NFCHC employees in the course of their duties.
- Electronic communication may be accessed by my health care provider's medical colleagues while caring for me when my health care provider is absent.
- Electronic communication will use respectful language.
- I will not send pictures via electronic communication.
- Electronic communication will not be used for frivolous or commercial purposes. Or any purpose outside the context of my direct patient-health care provider relationship.
- Electronic communication between me and the NFCHC will become part of my confidential patient record.
- The NFCHC may use electronic communication to send me alerts, health promotion material, and other educational resources.
- Electronic communication is a privilege that may be withdrawn at the discretion of the NFCHC.
- Electronic communication is only for the residents of Ontario and is governed by the laws of the Province of Ontario.
- Electronic communication 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 electronic communication once it has been sent.
- Electronic communication can introduce viruses into a computer system and potentially damage or disrupt the computer.
- Electronic communication senders can easily misaddress an email, resulting in it being sent to many unintended and unknown recipients. Electronic communication is indelible. Even after the sender and recipient have deleted their copies of the email, backup copies may exist on a computer or cyberspace.
- Use of electronic communication to discuss sensitive information can increase the risk of such information being disclosed to third parties.
- Emails may be forwarded internally to staff and to those involved, as necessary, for diagnosis, treatment, reimbursement, or health care operations.
- The NFCHC is not responsible for information loss due to technical failures.
- I will notify the NFCHC of any changes to my email address or change in mobile phone number.
- I acknowledge the NFCHC has the right to, upon provision of written or electronic communication notice, withdraw the option of communicating through email or any other means of electronic communication.
- I will not add the NFCHC electronic communication address to any group mailing list.
- Despite reasonable efforts to protect the privacy and security of electronic communication, it is not possible to completely secure the information.
- Employers and online services may have a legal right to inspect and keep electronic communications that pass through their system, within and outside of Canada.
- Electronic communications can introduce malware into a computer system, and potentially damage or disrupt the computer, networks, and security settings.
- Electronic communications can be forwarded, intercepted, circulated, stored, or even changed without the knowledge or permission of the Physician or the patient.
- Due to the sensitivity of the information, we recommend that you do not use a work email or shared email.