

GMA

Glenwood **Medical** Associates

Electronic Communication (E-Mail) Agreement

GMA's patient portal offers many easily accessible services for our patients to augment routine care provided in the office and/or by telephone. One feature of that electronic access is what we refer to as secure messaging, basically a secure email platform where we can communicate bi-directionally with patients while maintaining compliance with federal patient privacy laws collectively known as HIPPA. This consent form is in regard to secure messaging.

Electronic (online) forms of communications can include e-mail, webmail, secure messaging, electronic file transfer, text messaging and internet "portals" to exchange information between computers, tablets, smartphone. However, we have chosen to limit these options to our patient portal and secure messaging because we feel they are more secure in protecting patient personal health information. **Henceforth in this document, "E-Mail" and "secure messaging" will be used interchangeably but both will refer to secure messaging accessible only through our patient portal. We do not support patient correspondence via standard email, outside of our secure messaging options.**

Advantages

- E-mail is a simple, convenient and popular way of connecting; many people use it regularly
- Messages can be sent and received without needing both parties online at the same time
- Messages can be saved, copied and forward; they keep a record of what was said
- GMA's messaging system is encrypted to help keep information private
- Some questions and issues can be handled by online messaging without a phone call or visit

Disadvantages

- E-mail devices and connections can fail, messages can be lost and sent to the wrong person
- There is no way to know if a message was ever received
- Messages can contain typing mistakes
- If the other party is away or their device is turned off, messages might not be seen promptly
- It is possible for a dishonest person to send false message or impersonate a patient or a doctor
- If both parties are not online at the same time, there is no opportunity to clarify misunderstandings
- Saved copies or messages sent in error can't be erased or retracted
- Messages can contain viruses that can damage systems or steal information
- Some medical questions and issues cannot be handled through online messaging

Our E-mail Policies

1. **No emergencies or urgent messages.** E-mail is not to be used for emergencies or urgent messages. We do not monitor our in-box constantly. You can send a message any time, but we may not read it until the next business day. We check messages during regular work hours, and answer them in the order received. We try to deal with messages within 1 work day, but circumstances could cause us to fall behind. Use the telephone if you need a response right away. Of course, in a life-threatening emergency call 911.
2. **Uses.** Our practice accepts E-mail messages for these purposes:
 - a. **General messages** like making or changing appointments, billing issues, or other questions that can be answered by any appropriate staff person.

- b. **Medical question.** Through the GMA online portal patients can send a secure message directly to their healthcare provider for medical question; although, these communications may be screened and addressed with the assistance of a nurse or medical assistant. They might sometimes reply after hours and you should not expect providers to monitor their mail continuously. Even on call, it's likely the provider is not sitting at a computer. Again, if you have a problem that needs attention right away, use the telephone.
 - c. **Prescription renewals.** You can request refills of medicines we have previously prescribed, the same way you might do by leaving a phone message. If we have a question for you, we may respond by E-mail or phone. Please choose the renew medication option on the portal rather than send a generic message.
3. **Part of the record.** E-mail messages are considered part of your medical record. Our policies for records privacy and appropriate uses of medical information apply to messages we send to each other.
 4. **Security.** You need to protect both the unsecure E-mail address you give us as well as the access to your patient portal account to make sure our communication remains private. This is the only way we can trust that message from your E-mail are really from you and messages we send are not going to someone else. If we aren't sure about a message, we will try to contact you in some other way; however, we have to assume that your indicated electronic preference is secure.
 5. **Availability.** If you authorize us to use E-mail to communicate with you, we will assume that you check your in-box at reasonable intervals. We don't guarantee that we will respond to your messages and we understand you can't guarantee that you will respond to ours. In cases of uncertainty, we will try other ways to communicating.
 6. **Sensitive medical information.** We can't always know what information you consider especially private. We take care with all medical records, but we know that some facts are more sensitive than others. Because E-mail can't be guaranteed 100% secure, please don't put extremely sensitive matters in messages without considering this.
 7. **Voluntary.** Using E-mail is voluntary for both of us. **If you authorize us to use E-mail to communicate with you, we will assume that this is your preferred method of correspondence.** If we feel you are using E-mail inappropriately (or, if we think your address has been hacked by an imposter), we may contact you by other means and block your messages. If you decide you don't want to receive E-mail from us any longer, just let us know.
 8. **Changes of address.** If your E-mail address changes, you need to let us know.
 9. **Non-essential uses.** We will only use your E-mail address for important communications related to our practice. We will not give your E-mail address to anyone who is not part of our practice. Please don't send non-essential messages to us, because they slow down our ability to respond to the important ones.
 10. **Mistakes.** Mistakes happen. If you believe you have received or sent a message by mistake, or one that contains errors, please let us know. You should delete messages that are not intended for you.
 11. **Other risk.** In addition to those above, electronic communication can have other risk and disadvantages that might cause inconvenience or harm. Everyone using E-mail needs to use good judgement about these valuable technologies, and must remember that there are alternatives that would be better for some situations.

Acknowledgement and Agreement

I acknowledge that I have read this form. I understand that electronic (online) communication has risks, including possible risk not mentioned above. I agree to abide by the policies described above. I agree to use reasonable judgment with regard to any messages I send or receive. I do not have any unanswered questions about what this Agreement requires.

Patient (or legal representative) name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____