

Email communication information

As a patient of The Ankle and Foot Clinic of Northern Virginia, PLLC, you may request that we communicate with you via unencrypted email. This information sheet will inform you of the risks of communicating with your healthcare provider via email. Your health is important to us and we will make every effort to reasonably comply with your request to receive communications via email, however, we reserve the right to deny any request for email communications when it is determined that granting such a request would not be in your best interest.

Please read the following carefully:

Under the HIPAA Act, patients must be made aware of the risks with emailing information, and if the patient provides consent to receive health information via email; then a health entity may send that patient personal medical information via email.

Risk of using e-mail: The risks of transmitting patient information by e-mail include, but are not limited to, the following:

- E-mail can be circulated, forwarded, stored electronically and on paper, and broadcast to unintended recipients. Emails may be accessed by someone you do not wish to know about your health information.
- Despite necessary precautions, email may be sent to the wrong address by either party.
- Backup copies of e-mail may exist even after the sender, or the recipient has deleted his/her copy.
- Employers and on-line services have a right to inspect e-mail transmitted through their systems.
- E-mail can be intercepted, altered, forwarded, or used without authorization or detection.
- E-mail can be used to introduce viruses into computer systems.

Conditions of using e-mail: Our office will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of email information sent and received—however, we cannot guarantee the security of email communication. Thus, patients must consent to the use of email for patient information, billing, and communication. Consent to use email includes an agreement with the following conditions:

- Our medical staff may have access to the e-mails that you send. Such access will only be granted to those who have a right to access your e-mail to provide services to you. We will not forward e-mails to independent third parties without your prior written consent, unless as authorized or required by law.
- We will try to read and respond promptly to e-mails, though staff may not read your e-mail immediately. Therefore, you should not use email to communicate with us if there is an emergency or in a situation where you require an answer in a short period of time. We cannot guarantee that any particular e-mail will be read or responded to.
- If your e-mail requires or asks for a response and you have not received a response within an reasonable time period, it is your responsibility to follow up directly with us.
- Messages containing clinically relevant information may be incorporated into the medical record at the provider's discretion.
- You should carefully consider the use of e-mail for the communication of sensitive medical information, and you should never use PHI (protected health information) in the subject line of an email.
- Please keep messages concise. Recommended uses of email communication with our office should be limited to:
 - Appointment requests
 - Billing information
 - Prescription refills
 - Imaging requests
 - Updates to information or exchange of non-critical information such as laboratory values, etc.

We will use reasonable means to protect the privacy of the patient's health information. However, because of the risks outlined above, we cannot guarantee that e-mail will be confidential. Additionally, we will not be liable in the event that you or anyone else inappropriately uses or accesses your email. We will not be liable for improper disclosure of your health information that is not caused by our intentional misconduct.