

**New West Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery**  
**Electronic Communication Agreement**

**What Is Electronic Communication?**

Electronic communication includes e-mail and the patient portal to exchange information between computers, tablets, smart phones, and other devices capable of accessing an internet network. This form of communication can be a useful way for patients and healthcare providers to communicate, in addition to phone calls and visits.

**What Do You Need To Know?**

- 1. No emergent or urgent messages.** E-mail and the patient portal are not to be used for any emergencies or urgent messages. Inboxes are not monitored constantly. A message can be sent at anytime, but the message may not be read until later. Messages are checked during regular business hours only (Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm). If you need an immediate response then we recommend a telephone call. If it is a life threatening or emergency situation then call 9-1-1.
- 2. Our practice uses electronic communication methods for the following purposes:**
  - a. General messages** like making or changing appointments, billing questions, questions about the practice or any of our providers, or other general type inquiries.
  - b. Medical questions** which are non-emergent. Again, inboxes are not monitored constantly and if you are experiencing a life threatening or emergent situation then call 9-1-1.
  - c. Prescription renewals.**
- 3. Your questions may become part of your patient record.** Electronic communication will be protected by our HIPAA privacy and security standards.
- 4. Security.** We ask that you protect your e-mail address or patient portal username and password to help us make sure communication remains confidential. This is the only way that we can trust that messages are truly from you and that messages we send are not being viewed by somebody else. If we are unsure about an electronic message then we will contact you in some other way to confirm its validity.
- 5. Availability.** We assume that you will check your electronic messages at reasonable intervals if you request electronic communication. We don't guarantee that we will respond to every message and we understand that you may not respond to every one we send. In cases of uncertainty then we will try other ways of communicating.
- 6. Sensitive information:**
  - a. Zixmail Encryption:** Our office utilizes Zixmail encrypted messaging to protect e-mail messages while in transit. This will require you to create a username and password to access messages from our office. Unless you have an email encryption tool then messages you send are more at risk while in transit. Please don't put sensitive medical information in messages without considering this.
  - b. Patient Portal:** The patient portal is a secure link between our office and you. You create a username and password to access sensitive information; your username and password should not be shared with others. No utility is 100% secure. Please don't sign up for the patient portal without considering this.

7. **Voluntary use.** Neither you nor New West Sports Medicine has to use or accept electronic messages. If we feel the messaging tools are being used inappropriately, or if we think an account has been hacked, then we may discontinue use of electronic messaging. If you no longer want to receive electronic messages from us, then please let us know.
8. **Change of address:** It is your responsibility to notify us if your e-mail address changes. We will assume that the e-mail address you provide to us is current until we hear otherwise from you.
9. **Non-Essential Uses.** We will only use your e-mail address provided 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 avoid non-essential messages to us because they slow down our ability to respond to essential messages. If we feel that you are using electronic communication methods inappropriately then we reserve the right to no longer except electronic messages from you.
10. **Mistakes happen.** If you believe you have received or sent a message by mistake, or a message contains errors, then please let us know. You should permanently delete any messages that are not intended for you; we will do the same.
11. **Other risks.** In addition to those already listed, electronic communication can have other risks and disadvantages that might cause inconvenience or harm. Everyone using electronic messaging needs to use good judgment and remember that there may be alternatives that would be better for some situations.
12. **Expiration notice:**
  - a. **Patient portal for minors** will lock on the patient's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. The portal can be unlocked after an authorization form has been completed by the adult patient.
  - b. **Notify the practice** if you no longer wish to receive electronic communication. Information will continue to go to the patient portal if it has been setup until the practice has been notified differently. Likewise, it is important that New West be notified of any change to your e-mail address.
13. **Contact Information:**

New West Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery  
2810 W 35<sup>th</sup> Street  
Kearney, NE 68845  
Phone: (308) 865-2570

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**Acknowledgement and Agreement:**

I acknowledge that I have read the electronic communication agreement form. I understand that electronic communication has risks, including possible risks not mentioned. I agree to and understand the information provided by New West. I agree to use reasonable judgment with regard to any messages I send or receive. I do not have any unanswered questions about what the Agreement requires or states.

E-mail Address To Be Used: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient, or Legal Representative, Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_