

## **Patient's Guide to Secure Communication**

### **Why use secure email to communicate with us?**

Secure email communication has a number of advantages over other types of communication. It is fast, convenient, and efficient. It also works well for many of the questions, requests, or messages you may have for our practice such as prescription refill requests, appointment scheduling, and non-urgent medical questions.

This guide will help answer some of your questions about this new service. If you still have questions, please talk with your doctor or any team member. If you would like to use secure messaging to communicate with us, please contact registration at any of our locations and ask to be registered on our patient portal

### **What should I know about secure email communication?**

The most important thing you should know is that we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of exchanges. While the security of email is comparable to other types of communication (such as phone calls), there are some special issues with email.

- If your email address is through your employer, your employer may own all emails sent to that address.
- If your email address is a family address, other family members may see your messages
- If you use an internet service provider, there is a small risk that messages may be intercepted by others (such as computer hackers).

You should also know that secure messages you send to your doctor may be read by designated staff in our practice. Like phone calls, emails may be screened by office staff before being routed to the appropriate person for a response. Copies of your emails may be placed in your medical record.

Myrtle Hilliard Davis Comprehensive Health Centers Inc is continually exploring methods to make email more secure and more convenient, and we are delighted to use a product which provides our patients with 128-bit encryption. This is the highest amount of security in widespread use today, and we would welcome any questions you have about this.

Myrtle Hilliard Davis Comprehensive Health Centers, Inc is not responsible for any technical difficulties or network connection infractions beyond the computer and software systems we operate.

### **What types of communication are appropriate for secure email?**

The following types of requests or messages are appropriate for secure email:

- Prescription refill requests
- Appointment scheduling requests
- Non-urgent medical advice
- Non-urgent medical follow-up(including some types of test results)
- Non-urgent medical correspondence
- Billing/Insurance questions

While many subjects are appropriate for email communication, it is ultimately a decision between you and your clinician.

The following subjects are *never* appropriate for email:

- Any urgent medical problem or emergency
- Mental health issues
- Drug and alcohol problems
- HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases
- Work-related injuries and disability

Please keep in mind that although secure email can be a very effective, it is not a substitute for a physical exam by your doctor. Please call the office if you feel you need to see your doctor.

**How do I communicate with my doctor using secure email?**

You can expect a response to your email question or message within 3 business days. You should not expect to receive a response on weekends, holidays, or any other time the office may be closed.

**Avoiding Spam filter problems**

When someone from Myrtle Hilliard Davis Comprehensive Health Centers, Inc sends you a secure message, you should first receive a notification email in the inbox of your email program.

In some cases, however your email program’s spam filter misdirects the notification email to your spam, bulk or junk email folder. Refer to the following table for information about how to handle spam filter problems.

Email Program	Where to find misdirected notification emails	How to ensure that you receive notification emails in your inbox
AOL	Spam folder	Add <a href="mailto:donotreply@mhdchc.org">donotreply@mhdchc.org</a> to your AOL address book
Google Gmail	Spam folder	Add <a href="mailto:donotreply@mhdchc.org">donotreply@mhdchc.org</a> to your Gmail contacts list
Microsoft Hotmail	Junk email folder	In Hotmail help, search for “create a safe list;” then follow instructions in the corresponding topic
Microsoft Outlook	Junk email folder	In Outlook help, search for “add name to safe senders list;” then follow instructions in the corresponding topic.
Microsoft Windows Live Hotmail	Junk Folder	In the Windows Live Hotmail help, search for “block or allow;” then follow instructions in the corresponding topic
Yahoo! Mail	Spam or Bulk Mail folder	Add the sender of the notification email to your Yahoo! Address book

If you do not see instructions for your email program in the preceding table, please search your email program’s help system for “spam” or “safe sender;” then follow the instructions in that topic that best describe how to add a sender to a safe sender list.