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## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

### **Email:**

There are several concerns regarding using email as a form of communication with patients. These include that health information cannot be guaranteed to be secure and private when communicated electronically, that email is a format in which messages can occasionally be inadvertently missed, that emotional content communicated by email is prone to misinterpretation, and that if email messages are used as communication then it is expected that they be printed and included as part of the medical chart. For all these reasons, and also due to personal limits, I do not offer email as a means of communication with the practice. I ask all patients to **please refrain from sending email to me or to the practice. If practice-related emails are sent to my personal email address, it is practice policy to delete them unread. You are most welcome to contact me via phone, text, or fax if the matter cannot wait until the next appointment, or if urgent you may page me.** I make efforts to respond to pages in a timely manner, but cannot guarantee an immediate response. If for any reason you require immediate medical attention, please call 911.

### **Texting:**

As a supplement to phone and in-session contact, I offer text messaging as a means of contact with and also offer a text appointment reminder service. Set forth below are policies outlining when and how text messaging should be utilized to maintain your privacy and to enhance communication as well as a place for you to acknowledge your consent to its use. Your decision to utilize texting is strictly voluntary and your consent may be rescinded at any time. Text messages will be accessed on a daily basis on Tuesdays Wednesdays and Thursdays when the practice is open, and usually on Mondays and Fridays as well. You may expect a response to a text by the end of the next business day (i.e. a text sent over the weekend should receive a response prior to Tuesday morning). If after one business day, you have not received a response, please text again or leave a voicemail message in case a technical problem has occurred.

### **When am I invited to use text messaging to communicate with Dr. Cohen?**

Text messaging may be used for:

- Prescription refill requests (please include phone number of pharmacy)
- Rescheduling requests
- To inform the practice if you are running late
- To request or receive appointment reminders

### **When should phone or pager be used instead of text messaging?**

• Since texting that involves emotional content is highly subject to misinterpretation, and since it is expected that any treatment-related texts will be included in your medical record, I ask that you confine use of texting to **logistical purposes only** (see above). If you wish to discuss treatment outside of our sessions, please call me and communicate via voice.

• If you require a prompt response, e.g., severe medication reaction, arranging for necessary and help and medical care and then **paging me** is recommended.

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**What are the advantages of text messaging?**

- Texting provides a written record of key information, e.g. appointment times
- Texting is often less time-consuming than voice contact
- Dr. Cohen offers a text reminder service which may assist in allowing you to keep track of appointments

**What are the risks of using text messaging?**

- Texts may be seen by unintended viewers if addressed incorrectly
- Texts may be intercepted by hackers and redistributed, particularly if you have a cell phone plan that allows internet access to text messages
- Someone accessing your phone or someone posing as you could access your information
- Texts are potentially discoverable in litigation of any kind and may be used as evidence in court
- Research shows that texts and other written forms of communication are often misunderstood regarding their emotional content, which means that texting regarding emotional matters presents a significant risk of miscommunication and may negatively affect treatment

**What happens to my messages?**

- It is practice policy to delete emails unread. The practice reserves the right to include emails as part of the medical chart if for some reason there is an exception to this policy. However, the expectation is that this will not be necessary since patients will not be communicating with the practice via email.
- The practice reserves the right to include texts as part of the medical chart, or a written summary of text content, if need be. However, the expectation is that this will not be necessary, since text messages will not contain treatment-related information and will be used for logistical purposes only.

**What are my obligations?**

- I must let the practice know immediately if my phone number changes
- **I will use text communication only for logistical purposes and refrain from email communication with the practice.**
- I will advise Dr. Cohen in writing should I decide that I would prefer not to continue communicating via text or receiving text reminders of appointments.

**What steps has the practice taken to protect the privacy of my text communications?**

- Dr. Cohen has restricted access to her business cellular telephone to herself only
- The calendar and appointment reminder service used by Dr. Cohen are password-protected
- The appointment reminder service used by Dr. Cohen utilizes your contact information for reminder purposes only and for no other purpose.

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**CONSENT TO TEXT COMMUNICATION/REMINDER SERVICE**

By signing below, I consent to the use of text communication/text reminder service between myself, \_\_\_\_\_, and Dr. Cohen. I recognize that there are risks to its use, and despite Dr. Cohen's best efforts, she cannot absolutely guarantee confidentiality. I understand and accept those risks and the policies for text messaging and email outlined in the form. I further agree to follow these policies and agree that should I fail to do so, Dr. Cohen may cease to allow me to use text messaging to communicate with her. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent to communicate via text messaging or to receive text reminders of appointments at any time by notifying Dr. Cohen in writing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Patient**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Patient**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Cellular Telephone Number**