
THREE THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT: EMAIL

1. Email is relatively safe for the largely administrative uses; however, care should be taken when engaging in actual treatment of a patient via email. While it might be acceptable to utilize email for brief status updates, email should be used only to supplement more personal encounters rather than to replace them. (See AMA Ethics Opinion 2.3.1 Electronic Communications with Patients). Patients must understand that email is never to be used to report such things as suicidal ideation or reactions to medication.
2. If you choose to allow patients to communicate with you via email, set up policies within your office for handling email. These might include: establishing a response time for messages and coverage during weekends, holidays, etc., a method to triage messages to ensure that they are directed to the correct member of the office staff, and procedures for copying emails to patient charts.
3. Ask the patient to sign a consent form acknowledging the benefits, potential risks and limitations regarding the use of email. If you are using unencrypted email, the patient should specifically be told of the potential risk of breach and asked to acknowledge his/her consent to its use. This should be periodically updated to confirm patient's continued comfort with its use and to confirm patient's preferred email address.

Compliments of:



PRMS

Manager of The Psychiatrists' Program
Medical Professional Liability Insurance for Psychiatrists
1-800-245-3333

Email: TheProgram@prms.com

Visit: PRMS.com

Twitter: [Twitter.com/PRMS](https://twitter.com/PRMS)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/PRMSprograms](https://facebook.com/PRMSprograms)

LinkedIn: [LinkedIn.com/company/PRMSprograms](https://linkedin.com/company/PRMSprograms)

The content of this article ("Content") is for informational purposes only. The Content is not intended to be a substitute for professional legal advice or judgment, or for other professional advice. Always seek the advice of your attorney with any questions you may have regarding the Content. Never disregard professional legal advice or delay in seeking it because of the Content.