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THE EAR CENTER OF GREENSBORO, P.A.

Email Policy **The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A.** v. 2.13

To Our Patients:

The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A. recognizes that email may provide benefits for communicating with patients by facilitating ease, quickness, and efficiency. At this time, our use of email is limited to non-urgent and non-emergent communications that are not concerned with timeliness or direct medical issues.

Due to the complexities of appointment and surgery scheduling, office appointments and surgical operations are not scheduled by email. The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A. complies fully with **The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Privacy and Security Rules.**

Purpose: Because we are committed to maintaining strict patient confidentiality and timeliness, The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A. has developed an “*Email Policy*” to facilitate the judicious use of email. By signing our “*Email Policy*”, you acknowledge that you have read and understand the “*Email Policy*” and agree to all of its terms.

1. **Confidentiality & Timeliness:** It is well recognized that the use of email in the healthcare setting has the potential for creating special issues concerning confidentiality and timeliness. **Email sent to any email address has the potential to be accessed by unintended parties.**

Patients/parents/legal guardians acknowledge that email is not a confidential or private method of communicating with anyone. By signing this form, you understand that The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A., its physicians, and employees:

- (1) will not be encrypting email transmissions
 - (2) will not be held responsible for any email transmissions
 - (3) will be held harmless, and
 - (4) will be indemnified by the intended receiving party for all risks, including but not limited to, any potential issues of confidentiality or privacy concerning any and all email correspondence.
2. **Handling of Emergencies & Timeliness:** Patients/parents/legal guardians understand and agree that urgent care or emergency situations are ***never*** to be communicated via email. Urgent or emergent situations should always to be communicated in person or over the telephone. Urgent or emergent situations, by definition, require an office, urgent care, or emergency department visit.

It is understood that email sent to The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A., its physicians and employees, cannot, and will not, be checked according to any regular schedule and that any issue requiring a timely response should be handled in person or over the telephone.

At this time, The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A. does not schedule office appointments or surgical operations via email or electronic portal. All appointments should be scheduled in person or over the telephone.

3. **Discussing Sensitive/Private Issues & Reporting Bad News:** Sensitive or private issues should not be discussed via email communications. Email will not be used to report bad or potentially distressing news to any patient/parent/legal guardian or family member. Examples of such communications would include, but are not limited to, upsetting: (1) laboratory and/or pathology reports, (2) imaging results (CT and MRI scans, audiograms, etc.), (3) audiograms, (4) health status, etc.
4. **Appropriate Parties:** Email communications shall be strictly limited to current patients/parents/legal guardians of the P.A. that are being actively treated or followed. Email should not, and will not, be used as a substitute for direct, face-to-face patient interaction.
5. **Medical Records:** Patients/parents/legal guardians understand that email correspondence may be scanned into the patient's electronic medical record. At this time, electronic medical records are not being transmitted by email. However, when implemented, Phase III of Meaningful Use is expected to include the transmission of electronic medical records by secure email (*Direct*) among healthcare professionals and facilities.
6. **Access to Email:** Patients/parents/legal guardians understand that The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A., its physicians, and employees, will monitor and have access to all email communications. From time to time, The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A., its physicians and employees, may audit emails for compliance with the "**Email Policy**".
7. **Discretion to Withdraw Permission:** Patients/parents/legal guardians are free to withdraw their permission to communicate via email with The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A., at any time, for any reason, by providing notice in writing to the main office address. It is acknowledged that a reasonable amount of time may be required to terminate email communications.

Similarly, The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A., its physicians and employees, at their discretion, reserve the right to:

- (1) Terminate email communications at any time, and for any reason, with or without cause, and
- (2) Amend the P.A.'s "**Email Policy**", at any time, and for any reason(s) deemed to be prudent, reasonable, appropriate, or that may be required by law.

Acknowledgement:

By signing this document below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the "**Email Policy**" of The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A. as described above and that I freely agree to all of its terms and conditions. I give my permission to The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A., its physicians, and its employees, to communicate with me by email and that my permission is granted in full and without conditions. I understand that I may withdraw my permission, in writing, at any time. Furthermore, I understand that email is not a confidential way to communicate and that I fully acknowledge that unintended parties may access my email communications.

Printed Name of Patient/Parent/Legal Guardian

Signature of Patient/Parent/Legal Guardian

Date

*Please return to The Ear Center of Greensboro, P.A. at the above address.