



ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION POLICY FOR SONORAN UNIVERSITY CLINICS

Sonoran University of Health Sciences deploys a variety of electronic communication mediums to best serve our patients. Electronic communications are not considered a substitute for patient appointments or consultations. However, the use of email, SMS/text messages, and Patient Portal messaging allows Sonoran University to connect with patients quickly and conveniently for scheduling and administrative matters.

Patient Information and Electronic Communication

Sonoran University will not include patient health information in email or SMS/text messages. Patient Portal messaging, in its restricted and secure format, will serve as the only electronic communication in which patient health information may be included. Neither Sonoran University, nor the patient, should use electronic communication, ***except for the patient portal***, to share sensitive medical information such as sexually transmitted disease status, AIDS/HIV status, mental health, developmental disability, or substance abuse information. All electronic communications may become part of the patient health record. Patients are recommended to print or download a copy of this disclosure and any other communication and/or notice deemed important by the patient.

Sonoran University Response

Sonoran University attempts to answer all electronic communications in a timely manner, however; if the patient has not received a response within a reasonable time period, it is the responsibility of the patient to follow up to determine whether the intended recipient received the communication.

Electronic Communication Mediums

Automatic Emails

Sonoran University will send patients the following emails, unless otherwise specified by patient:

- I. Patient Portal account creation
 1. Patient Portal account lockout/password reset
- II. Appointment scheduling confirmations
- III. Notice of information posted to Patient Portal account including:
 1. Portal messages sent by Sonoran University
 2. Lab results
 3. Billing statements

Statement on Security

Sonoran University utilizes several information security resources including, but not limited to, email encryption technology. However, several security threats reside outside Sonoran University's control such as security of the recipient's: email account, internet connection, and devices that may contribute to an information breach.

Because of these risks, Sonoran University cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of email and SMS/text message communication and will not be liable for improper disclosure of confidential information resulting from a security breach originating on the patient's end.

Please note: Sonoran University does not accept medical records via email.

SMS/Text Messaging

Sonoran University utilizes SMS/Text communication in a limited capacity using only a minimum amount of patient identifying information. Sonoran University Clinics rely on SMS/text functionality to communicate the following:

- I. Appointment confirmation messages and appointment check-in
- II. Special instructions related to visits



- III. Payment balance notifications and payments (Dr Bethel’s patients cannot make payments on the portal, please call to pay)
- IV. Additional communication related to visits and patient accounts

Healow and SMS/Text Messaging

Sonoran University utilizes Healow for additional functionality within text messages. Healow is a secure text application of our electronic medical records software. Patients can use Healow for the following:

- I. Confirm appointment
- II. Check-in for appointment
- III. Make payments (Dr Bethel's patients cannot make payments on the portal)
- IV. Update patient demographics for the practice

Please note: Sonoran University does not reply to text messages.

Patient Portal Messaging

Sonoran University offers communication via the Patient Portal. This electronic communication medium is safely encrypted and directly transmits information between the Portal and Sonoran University’s electronic medical record system. As such, Portal messaging affords the clinic and the patients the opportunity to safely share electronic personal health information.

- I. Appointment questions, including scheduling and rescheduling requests
- II. Medication refill requests
- III. Balance inquiries
- IV. General questions pertaining to treatment and overall health
- V. Questions pertaining to lab reports/results

Sonoran University will respond to portal queries in a timely manner, however; Sonoran University cannot guarantee an exact response time. Therefore, patients are advised not to send time-sensitive messages via the Patient Portal.

Medically Urgent Inquiries

Portal messaging should never be used in an emergency. Patients who require urgent assistance **should CALL 911** in lieu of sending a portal message.

Consent

By signing below, you acknowledge your recognition and understanding of the inherent risks of electronic communication and hereby consent to electronic communications as outlined in this document. Further, you agree to hold Sonoran University harmless for unauthorized use, disclosure, or access of you protected health information due to any security breaches originating on the recipient’s end. You have the right to rescind consent to these policies at any time upon provision of written notice to the Sonoran University Senior Practice Manager.

PATIENT NAME (printed)

SIGNATURE: Patient or legally authorized individual

DATE:

PRINT NAME: Patient or legally authorized individual

RELATIONSHIP: (self, parent, legal guardian, personal representative, etc.)