



## Email Policies:

**Introduction:** E-mail is one of several options available for doctor-patient communication. E-mail sends written messages through the internet. The main advantage of E-mail is convenience. Each person can read and respond to their E-mail at a time convenient to him or her. The main disadvantages are a potentially slow response time and a potential lack of privacy. All E-mail communication will be placed into your medical record and treated like the other information contained in your record.

**Policies:** Patients of Thornburg Pediatrics have the option of communicating with the office by E-mail. Prior to doing this, you need to read through this policy sheet carefully and sign it below. Your full name and the child's name must be included in any E-mail messages. Many E-mail programs do not automatically include your name so you must be sure to include it.

E-mails may get lost while traveling between the sender and the recipient. Thornburg Pediatrics' E-mail program sends an automatic notice back to you when your E-mail arrives at the office. If you don't receive this notice, then the office probably did not receive your E-mail and you should send it again. It may take up to 2-3 business days for the office to answer E-mails. If this is too long for you to wait for an answer, then please call the office at 239-348-7337. If the practice's response will take longer than normal due to something like vacation, the automatic notice will notify you. Similarly, Thornburg Pediatrics' E-mails will arrive with a request for a return receipt. We will only know that you have received our E-mail if you send the receipt back.

E-mail is only appropriate for certain types of doctor-patient communication. Specifically, E-mail is useful for fairly simple, non-urgent questions. One example of an appropriate E-mail question is asking if an over the counter medicine is OK to take with your prescription medications. Another example is asking about a news story that seems to say one of your medications is dangerous.

Thornburg Pediatrics has the exclusive right to decide what is and is not appropriate for E-mail. If the practice decides that your question is not appropriate for E-mail, you will be informed. This will generally be by E-mail but may be by phone or some other method.

**Confidentiality:** Thornburg Pediatrics is the only one who will read E-mails received at the office's E-mail address. Sometimes, other members of the other office staff may become involved in answering your question. A copy of any E-mail messages sent by either you or Thornburg Pediatrics will be placed into your child's permanent medical record.

E-mail messages travel through the internet. This means that the message is passed along a series of computers a bit like a bucket brigade. It is possible for someone to read the E-mail as it passes between computers. This is very unlikely, but it is possible. Do not put anything into an E-mail that you feel must remain absolutely confidential between you and the doctor. A good "rule of

thumb" is to not discuss anything by E-mail that you would not want to discuss on a cell phone in a crowd of strangers. It is possible to use a code to encrypt E-mails and make them unreadable. Speak with your computer consultant if you would like to be set up for encryption.

If you have any questions about these policies, please ask Dr. Thornburg or one of the other office staff. If you feel that you understand all of these policies and you would like to add E-mail to the ways you communicate with the doctor, then print this page out, sign and date below and return this form to one of the office staff.

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_

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