

Practice Question of the Month

September 2009

Communicating With Clients Via Email


Welcome! To enhance communication and education of our members, the College has developed a *Practice Question of the Month* five-minute module series.

The September 2009 module will provide information to RDs on communicating with clients via email.

Note that you may need temporarily disable your pop-up blocker on your computer to access the resources links in this module.

Please take the time at the end of the module to fill out a short survey. We appreciate your input and value your feedback.

Now let's begin...



College of Dietitians of Ontario

Are Registered Dietitians permitted to communicate with clients via email?

A) Yes

B) No

Are Registered Dietitians permitted to communicate with clients via email?

Please select the most appropriate answer to this practice question and click submit when finished.



Answer: Yes

- RDs may communicate with clients via email provided the following safeguards are in place...

The correct answer to this practice question is Yes.

RDs may communicate with clients via email provided the following safeguards are in place...

Safeguards

- Encrypt emails with software programs
- Alternately, use client ID # or initials vs. full name
- Avoid including personal health information in emails

In communicating with clients via email, there may be times when personal health information is being discussed. The Information & Privacy Commissioner's Office of Ontario requires that all personal health information that is transferred electronically (including emails) be encrypted to ensure the information is kept private and confidential.

Encryption can be done through sophisticated software programs or by using client initials or ID numbers to ensure anonymity.

RDs can take additional precautions when communicating via email by not including personal health information or formal diagnoses in communications with clients.

Safeguards

- Always a risk that Internet security may be compromised
- Inform clients of email security issues
- Obtain client consent
- Consult organizational policies

Despite the fact that organizations strive to ensure security, there is always a risk that information transmitted through the Internet may be hacked into or tampered with. Because the Internet is not 100% secure, clients need to be informed of the security issues surrounding email communication.

RDs should always obtain client consent when communicating with clients via email. Client consent should be obtained when communicating via email directly with clients and when communicating with other health care providers about any issues pertaining to a client's nutrition care plan.

The College has heard from RDs that some facilities do not allow employees to communicate with clients via email. RDs should investigate whether their organization has any policies restricting email communication with clients.

Helpful Resources

IPC fact sheet:

[Wireless Communication Technologies:
Safeguarding Privacy & Security](#)

For more information on privacy when using electronic devices, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (IPC) has developed a fact sheet titled: *Wireless Communication Technologies: Safeguarding Privacy & Security*.

Click on the link on this slide to access this resource.



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**Thank you for taking the time to view the
September 2009 Practice Question of the Month.**

Please click [here](#) to access the survey.

Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time to view the September 2009 Practice Question of the Month on *Communicating with Clients via Email*.

Please take a moment to click on the link on this slide to fill out a short survey regarding this five-minute e-learning module.

Your feedback is greatly appreciated.