



PATIENT INFORMATION GUIDE 2018

Welcome

Welcome to Columbia Valley Community Health (CVCH). Thank you for trusting us with your care. We believe that the foundation of all health care is a **trusting relationship**. Key to good relationships is good communication, and a solid understanding of what we can expect from each other. This guide outlines how we do what we do, and what you can expect from us. Healthcare is very complex. In this guide, we attempt to keep the information simple and easy to understand. If you would like to discuss anything you read here in greater detail, we would be happy to have that discussion with you. Just ask!

Team based care

At CVCH we care for you as a team of healthcare professionals. Healthcare today is similar to a Formula One race where you arrive and an entire “pit crew” surrounds you, checks, adjusts, corrects, fixes, and then pushes you back out into the race. To do that well everyone on your healthcare team needs to be professional, great at what they do, needs to have your best interest at heart, and needs to be able to communicate with each other about the best way to care for you.

Your “pit crew” includes professionals such as physicians and dentists and psychologists and nurses and laboratory technicians and receptionists and quality experts and grounds keepers and billing experts and many others, all of whom have committed to a life of service caring for other people – people like you. We all rely upon your “health record” to keep track of your health history, our thoughts about what is causing any problem you might be experiencing, and our plan for how we will work together to improve things for you. That health record is fully encrypted and safe, and we work hard to keep it that way.

We practice evidence based medicine. What that means is that when scientific studies have proven that a particular treatment leads to the best results, we should all use that particular treatment. However, more than half of the time in medicine either there is NOT good evidence as to what is the best way to treat a problem, or it is unclear just what the problem actually is. That is why we employ highly trained and very experienced providers who bring dozens of years’ experience and excellent judgement as they care for you.

Protecting your privacy while taking good care of you

We are proud that you trust us with very personal information. We work hard to keep what you tell us private and protected. You will notice that our computers shut down after a few minutes if we are not using them – that is to keep what is on them safe. You will notice that staff must use their badges to unlock the computers – that is to keep you safe. You will notice that we won’t speak about any of our other patients with you, even if they are in your family – that is to keep you safe.

However, we do communicate about you, and about your conditions, to other members of your healthcare team. That is how we take good care of you, and, by doing so, keep you safe.

If you would like to give us permission to discuss your healthcare with specific people (maybe your spouse, or your parent), we will ask you to sign a “Release of Information” form. That gives us permission to discuss your healthcare with another person.

We may also need to discuss your healthcare with other healthcare professionals who work outside CVCH. We would only ever do that to obtain their opinion of the best way to care for you, or to coordinate with them to also care for you. Your health insurance company may also require information about your care, and may require us to share your information with them prior to them paying for your care. We may discuss your care in our role as teachers of health care professionals (that is, use your case to teach students). For more details about who might have access to your health information, please review our “Notice of Privacy Practices.”

Finally, there are times when we are mandated by law to report our concerns about you, or your behavior, to the authorities: If you threaten to harm yourself or someone else; if we are concerned that you, or someone in your family are being abused; or if we receive a subpoena from a judge to provide your health records to the court.

In a small town, you may know members of your care team as friends, cousins, from church, from soccer, and you may worry about what it means that all team members have access to all your private health information. This is where the “trust” in “trusting therapeutic relationship” comes in. Everyone employed at CVCH has taken an oath to protect your privacy. We are people and thus patients too. We each have our own healthcare team who cares for us, so we totally understand your privacy concerns. We pledge to you that we will only share information about you with people who need that information to take good care of your health.

If you are under that age of 18, we need your parent’s permission to care for you, and we may discuss your healthcare with your parents. The only time that is not true is if you are 13 or older and are discussing issues of behavioral health (depression, addiction) or issues of sexual health (contraception, sexually transmitted diseases). We are not allowed to discuss those issues with your parents without your permission.

Your rights and responsibilities

We have a separate document which describes all your rights and responsibilities as a patient at CVCH. Briefly, when you trust us with your care, you have the right:

- To be treated with dignity, respect, compassion, and integrity
- To be told the truth about what we think is going on with you
- To be educated about what we have discovered, and why we are recommending what we are recommending
- To receive all and only the care appropriate to your health condition
- To be told the potential benefits and potential harms of any course of treatment
- To elect NOT to participate in our recommended treatment
- To a second opinion, if you would like one
- To participate in choosing your provider
- To request a different provider (we have a process wherein a team will review your request and transfer your care if we have a new provider to see you.)

- To help us improve by bringing any complaints or concerns about your care to our Quality Department without fear of any sort of reprisal.

As a patient at CVCH, you have the responsibility:

- To treat care team members with courtesy and respect
- To provide full and honest information about your condition
- To let us know when you don't understand something, or need something better explained
- To let us know if you are not improving under our care, or if you have stopped a recommended treatment
- To maintain a healthy lifestyle
- To arrive on time for your appointments, and cancel appointments more than 24 hours in advance
- To pay CVCH for all services we provide for you

You are responsible to pay for your care

How healthcare is paid for in this country is very complex, and is changing all the time. Please remember that you are ultimately responsible to pay for the care we provide, even if you have insurance and even if you feel you cannot afford it. We will never withhold appropriate care from you based upon your ability to pay, but that doesn't mean that we don't expect you to pay for your care. We work very closely with insurance companies to meet their requirements for payment. However, we do not work for the insurance companies, and it is not our responsibility to know what your insurance will and will not pay for. That is your responsibility. If you don't know whether your insurance company will pay for a service, it is up to you to find out by calling your insurance company and asking them. If you ask us to provide a service for you, then you are agreeing to pay for that service.

CVCH does have special programs to help people who don't have health insurance. Please ask us about how we might help you if you do not qualify for health insurance.

Giving us permission to care for you

We need your permission to care for you. We call that permission "consent for care." When you come to CVCH for your healthcare, you are trusting us to keep you safe, and to take excellent care of you. You are trusting that we will only recommend safe and cost effective treatments, that we won't order too many tests, or too few tests. By agreeing to receive care at CVCH you are agreeing that we may treat you, may examine you, may order tests for you, and that we may discuss your care with other healthcare professionals to assure you have the best possible outcomes and are as healthy as possible. By signing your "consent for care" you are giving us permission to do all these things.

Because we want you to trust us, we will explain things to you, answer your questions, and make sure that you understand what we are doing together. However, healthcare is just too complex and often time is too short for us to ask your permission every time we need to do something. Therefore, we rely upon the fact that since you are asking us to care for you, that you are giving us permission to care for you.

There are many situations in which we will ask for specific permission to do things to you. Typically these are surgical procedures (removing a mole, extracting a tooth). In those situations, we will

explain the potential benefits and harms in the procedure, we will explain what the alternatives are, and will ask you to sign a separate piece of paper stating that you “consent” to procedure.

Appointments are precious

We have more requests for appointments than we have appointments available. Because appointments are precious, we ask that you please let us know if you cannot make an appointment.

- We ask that you cancel your appointment at least 24 hours in advance. That gives us time to offer your appointment to someone else.
- Even if it is less than 24 hours, please call us to discuss what is going on so that we might reschedule you.
- We have a policy that if you miss three appointments in a twelve-month period without alerting us and cancelling, you will no longer be able to make appointments with us, and will be limited to seeing us when someone else cancels an appointment, or in a same-day appointment.

Accessing Care

There are three ways to access care with us.

- **Most of your needs are available on our PORTAL access system** – As a patient with CVCH you will be offered access to a secure email messaging system called the “Portal.” To use the Portal, you need an email address, and access to the internet, either on a smart-phone or a computer. If you want to communicate with us you would log on to the Portal which allows you to request appointments, refill medications, see your bill, or send a message to your care team. This is your personal page, and only you can access it. You would receive an email that just says “you have a message waiting for you on the Portal” – without any other details. You then click the link in the email and it takes you to your Portal page to see the message. This is the most efficient and secure way to access your care team without a clinic visit.
- **Telephone access; best for appointments and billing issues** –If all you need is an appointment, or to discuss a bill, a telephone call works well. If you have a clinical question and need to speak with your care team, that is more difficult because most of the time your providers and nurses are with patients in exam rooms, not sitting near a phone, so you will need to leave a message. If you want to communicate with us by telephone, please help us by assuring:
 - You always give us the best number to call you back.
 - Your phone is operational, and able to receive messages.
 - You have voice mail set up, and that nobody who shouldn’t hear messages about your health can hear your voice mail messages.
 - Your mail box is not full.

- Your outgoing message contains your name and voice so that we know we dialed the right number and are speaking with your voicemail.
- You make it clear when you leave a message with us that we may leave a message with you on your voice mail. Say something like “it is fine to leave a voice mail on this number.”
- **Face to face visits are the main way we work together** – You make an appointment with us, come to the clinic, and spend time in face to face conversations with your provider. This is the most intensive and cumbersome (for the patient) way we work together. It is also the only way CVCH is paid, and so must be our first priority.
- Remember, if you need a prescription refilled you should call your pharmacy, not the prescribing provider, for that refill.

Teaching healthcare professionals

Recruiting healthcare providers to a small town is difficult. Over time we have discovered that the very best way to make sure that we always have enough providers and nurses is to train them here. CVCH is a training institution. As a patient at CVCH, you play a very important role in training our future healthcare providers. Healthcare professional students at CVCH are always under close supervision. At no time would a student make a diagnosis or treatment decision without the approval of a senior licensed staff member. Training healthcare professionals does take more time. However, if we are unwilling to train the best possible healthcare providers, we should not expect to have good quality healthcare providers to help us when we need help in the future.

If you would rather NOT work with a student, please explain that to your healthcare team at the beginning of your visit.

Thank you. We are proud that you trust us with your care, and feel privileged to play this special role in your life. Thank you for being a patient at Columbia Valley Community Health!