

INTRODUCTION TO ELECTRONIC FAXING SOLUTIONS (E-FAXING GUIDE)

Summary

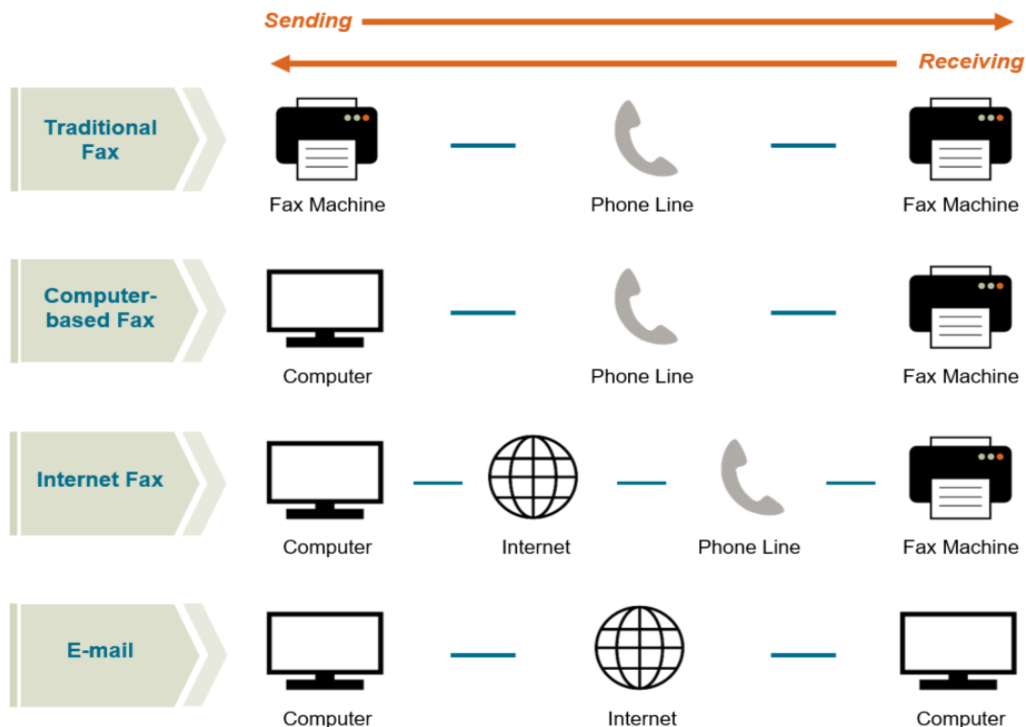
This document is intended for physicians and teams exploring electronic faxing (e-faxing) solutions and provides an overview of the technology to assist you in making informed decisions for your practice. As each e-faxing solution is different, you will need to speak with the service provider directly to understand how their specific technology works and how to integrate with your unique clinic workflows.

Introduction

E-fax, also referred to as electronic fax, online fax or internet fax, is a web-based service that uses the internet to transmit faxes. It is increasingly being used in physician offices as a modern alternative to paper-based faxing. E-faxing is appealing because it maintains the simplicity of faxing while eliminating the need for an actual fax machine at either or both the sending and receiving ends.

Types of E-faxing Solutions

There are essentially two types of faxing that people may be referring to when they use the term e-fax: **Computer-based faxing** and **Internet faxing**. The diagram below helps illustrate the differences between the various methods of communication:



Computer-based fax: The main difference between this method and traditional faxing is that it eliminates the need to print a hard copy of a document and then manually fax using a fax machine. Rather, the user can 'print' from their computer directly to the fax machine/server and the fax will automatically be sent via the phone line.

Internet fax: This method of faxing is more commonly considered 'true' e-faxing because it eliminates the need for a phone line, fax machine or local fax server - everything happens over the internet using a third-party web server. The sender electronically uploads the fax to a hosted web server, which will then convert the fax (typically into a PDF or TIFF file) and transmit it to the receiver via the internet.

E-mail: Both internet fax and e-mail use the internet to send messages but standard e-mail does not have the ability to communicate with a fax machine. Some internet fax providers do offer an 'e-mail to fax' service, which allows the user to send and receive e-faxes using their e-mail account. However this functionality is only possible with the help of an e-fax service and not available using a standalone e-mail service provider (e.g. Gmail).

Receiving Faxes

The workflow for receiving e-faxes will depend on your specific service provider and the method of transmission (i.e. phone line vs. internet).

Computer-based fax: Users may be limited to receiving paper faxes via their fax machine, or there may be the option to receive faxes directly to a local computer. Faxes that are sent directly to a local computer are automatically deposited into a folder or shared drive and then need to be sorted manually and uploaded to a patient's record in the electronic medical record (EMR). Because this system is not internet-based there are limitations to where the faxes can be received (local computer) and when (software must be running).

Internet fax: Internet-based solutions generally allow the user to send and receive faxes from any device or location, which may include a web page, e-mail or smart phone application. As with computer-based faxing, these files typically also need to be retrieved from a central location and manually sorted and attached to a patient's record in the EMR. Some EMRs do offer integrated e-faxing solutions which allow the user to send and receive faxes directly from the EMR and eliminate some of the manual steps.

Choosing an E-Fax Solution

There are many different internet fax services available that will vary with respect to features, functionality and cost. Your EMR may already offer an integrated e-faxing solution and we encourage you to speak with your vendor directly to understand your options. DTO is also actively working to catalogue the e-faxing services that are available through each EMR system and you can contact us for more information or for general guidance on technology selection.

IMPORTANT:

You should also confirm that any e-faxing solution you choose is compliant with the relevant privacy requirements, which will depend on your specific practice (either PIPA or FIPPA). For more information on privacy legislation requirements and best practices for use of fax, please refer to the [BC Physician Privacy Toolkit](#) (pages 52-56) and the [Physician Office Security Guide](#) (page 21).

Frequently Asked Questions

Can a physician in my clinic continue to receive paper faxes if I switch to using e-fax?

Every physician in the clinic who is using the same fax number will also be required to receive faxes in the same manner. If you are using an e-faxing service that receives faxes as an electronic document, your colleagues will also need to switch to this method and can no longer receive paper faxes.

Can I keep my current fax number?

Whether you can keep your current fax number will depend on the service provider that you choose. The majority of providers will allow you to keep your current number but may charge a small fee.

Will all faxes be received as a PDF?

The majority of e-fax solutions do limit any incoming faxes to PDF or TIFF file types. When sending faxes you may have the option to upload a variety of file types, which will then automatically get converted to an acceptable file format before getting sent to the receiver.

What are the benefits to using e-fax?

E-faxing may not be the right solution for everyone and it is important that you consider your clinic's unique needs and workflows before committing to a switch. Below are a few of the potential benefits for implementing e-fax:

- No maintenance of a fax machine or any other hardware
- Can access faxes outside of the clinic
- Multiple faxes can be sent and received simultaneously, increasing efficiency
- Increased confidentiality as faxes are no longer received in an open space

DISCLAIMER

This document is intended to provide a high level overview of select topics regarding e-faxing. For a more detailed discussion please contact DTO at the coordinates below. We also encourage you to speak to your local IT professional and EMR vendor to learn more about your options and processes for ensuring adherence to privacy and security requirements.

For more information, guidance, or support please contact:

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