

Professional Communication in the Workplace



Thunder Bay Regional
Health Sciences
Centre

Thunder Bay Regional
Health Research
Institute

Choose the right channel, communicate clearly, and be respectful.

How we communicate with colleagues matters. In a busy health care environment, choosing the right communication channel can reduce misunderstandings, unnecessary interruptions, and email overload.



Email

Best for:

Information that needs to be documented, referred to later or shared in detail.

Keep it professional:

- Use a clear, specific subject line.
- Keep messages concise and put the key information first.
- Clearly state what you need and when you need it.
- Be thoughtful about who you include on an email. Use CC for people who need to be kept informed, BCC when recipients' email addresses need to remain private (or when emailing a large group), and Reply All only when everyone included needs to see your response.
- Proofread by checking spelling and grammar before sending and check recipients, attachments, and links.
- Avoid using High Priority unless the matter is genuinely urgent.
- If an email becomes lengthy or involves repeated back-and-forth, pick up the phone or arrange a conversation or meeting.
- If away from work, enable your out-of-response with your expected return date and alternative contact for urgent matters.



Text

Best for:

Brief, time-sensitive messages when texting is an established and appropriate way to reach someone.

Text is generally not the best choice for:

- Lengthy or complex discussions.
- Sensitive or confidential information (especially any form of Personal Health Information).
- Information that needs a formal record.
- Situations requiring detailed explanation or discussion.



Phone / Teams Call / In Person

Best for:

Conversations that are complex, sensitive, or difficult to resolve in writing.

Consider a conversation when:

- You have gone back and forth over email or Teams.
- There is a risk of misunderstanding.
- You are discussing a sensitive or potentially contentious issue which requires clarity and privacy.
- The situation requires problem-solving or explanation.
- Something is genuinely urgent.



Microsoft Teams

Best for:

Quick questions, brief discussions, and day-to-day collaboration.

Remember to:

- Keep messages clear and purposeful.
- Avoid sending multiple short messages when one complete message will do.
- Use @mentions thoughtfully. Don't create unnecessary notifications.
- Respect colleagues' availability and workload.
- Move to a conversation or call if it becomes complicated, sensitive, or difficult to resolve.



Before You Hit Send

Finally, take a moment to think about how your message will be received. Is it going to the right person, through the right channel, and at the right time? Make sure you're sharing enough information to provide context, while keeping your message clear and focused. A respectful, professional tone and clear expectations about what you need and when you need it can go a long way toward avoiding misunderstandings and keeping communication positive and productive.