

NOTICE TO PATIENTS OF NATION RIVER CLINIC

Fee for Prescriptions Without a Visit

The last decade has posed tremendous financial challenges for Ontario's hard-working physicians. Since 2012, the Ontario Government had cut family physicians' funding and billings by effectively over 20%. All the while, the costs of overhead, inflation, and taxes have increased without relief. Furthermore, there have been recent advances in technology that improve patient care and convenience, but also cost money. Accordingly, we decided to review our office policies and procedures to continue to provide the quality care that every patient expects and deserves.

Did you know ... ?

- The Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) pays for most of your medical visits and services. However, there are many uninsured services, which OHIP does not cover.
- OHIP generally only pays for medical assessments and advice that is given in person, face-to-face, with a patient.
- Medical advice, questions, forms or prescription renewals via fax or email are *not* covered by OHIP (the physician is not being reimbursed a single dollar by OHIP for these services).
- Every single phone call, prescription request, form, letter, note, email, fax, or other such request requires the time, skill, and resources of the staff and physician. Hundreds of such requests every day amount to enormous costs to operate a medical clinic efficiently.

Effective June 1st 2023, there will be a \$25 fee for prescriptions without a visit for patients of the Nation River Health Clinic.

Please know that the primary purpose is not to collect revenue from patient but rather to decrease the tremendous administrative burden of avoidable prescription requests.

Alternatively, patients will always be offered an in person "Prescription Renewal Visit" within 5 business days of received your prescriptions refill request. Otherwise, the fee will be waived.

Every day, our office still receives a huge number of prescription requests, even from patients who:

- (i) Already have repeats at their pharmacy;
- (ii) Call in for one medication one day, and then call in for another a few days later, instead of calling in for them all at once;
- (iii) Call in for a prescription even though they just recently saw the doctor and could have asked for it then.
- (iv) Have misplaced prescriptions that were already given.

How Will Charging a Fee help?

For years, many physicians' offices have already been charging fee for prescriptions without visits. These offices report the following advantages:

- Patients take increased responsibility and improve organization of their medications.
- The number of prescription requests drops significantly, from hundreds down to less than a few per day, in most cases.
- This frees up staff and physician time to care for patients. It also frees up the telephone and fax lines for more urgent matters.
- In many cases, if a patient is running out of medications, it is time for the patient to come in for a visit anyway, which in turn improves patient care.

Please know that charging a fee is not an attempt to collect revenue from patients. Rather, the primary intent is to decrease the tremendous administrative burden of avoidable prescription requests.

We look forward to continuing to provide my patients with the quality and timely care they expect and deserve.

Frequently ask questions:

Clarifications and Examples:

- Multiple medications on a single prescription request count as only one. For example, if a patient requests 4 medications at once, the fee is \$25 (not \$100).
- If a patient calls in for a medication one day, and then again, the next day (or even a few hours later), that counts as 2 separate requests, \$25 each.
- If a patient requests a prescription renewal, even if he/she should still have repeats, we will renew a fresh prescription as requested and the fee applies.
- The fee applies to all of telephone, voicemail, or online requests.

Booking Prescription Renewal Visits:

- For patients who need simple Prescription Renewal Visits, the goal is to guarantee an appointment before the patient's medications are due, providing the patient has followed our policy of allowing **FIVE BUSINESS DAYS** for any prescription request.
- If we offer appointment options, but the patient declines them, that is the patient's choice and a fee is still applicable if the patient requests a renewal without a visit.
- If we are not able to offer an appointment within those 5 business days, then the fee will be waived.

Prescriptions Requests from Pharmacy:

- It must be the patient or caregiver who initiates the request and agrees to the fee. We will no longer accept prescription requests from pharmacies.

Exceptions When the Fee may be Waived or Pharmacy Requests Accepted:

- We will make exceptions on a case-by-case basis and waive/reduce the fee in special circumstances, such as:
 - Frail, elderly, patients, or those with dementia, who cannot easily come in for a visit.
 - Patients on Warfarin (Coumadin) (see below).

Exemptions may simply be one-time only. For instance, your doctor may waive the fee for a patient one month, but three months later, he may need to see that same patient in person for assessment so that patient should come in for a visit, not renew over phone.

Warfarin (Coumadin) Prescriptions:

- Warfarin Rx's will be *exempt* from the fee.
- The rationale here is that patients may frequently require dose changes, which is not within their control and repeated visits to reassess a simple dose change are not medically necessary.

After-Hours Clinics:

- Appointments for prescription refills will not be booked in after hours clinic .