

## E-mailing on the run

*Web, wireless access help users stay connected.*

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Many physicians communicate with patients or colleagues via e-mail but lose this connectivity when they travel. If you find traditional home and office e-mail accounts are no longer enough, several e-mail access options can help you stay connected anytime.

### HOW E-MAIL WORKS

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Typical home e-mail accounts-known as post office protocol (POP) accounts-use a client-server access method. The client-such as Outlook Express, Eudora, or Netscape Mail-checks the server for mail, which is then downloaded onto the home computer. Once downloaded, the message is gone from the server.

By contrast, an Internet message access protocol (IMAP) account offers more capabilities, such as allowing users to store e-mail on the server and organize mail into folders.<sup>1</sup> Although typically used in the workplace, some Internet service providers (ISP) offer IMAP accounts to home users.

### WEB MAIL

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Most users can access e-mail from a Web browser on any computer connected to the Internet.

For example, if Earthlink is your home Internet service provider (ISP), visit <http://webmail.earthlink.net>. By entering your e-mail address and password into the form, your e-mail appears in the browser. Your messages remain on the server, but you are reading, deleting, and sending messages from your home account while on the road.

If your ISP doesn't provide Web mail, consider mail2web's free message access service. mail2web ([www.mail2web.com](http://www.mail2web.com)) tries to guess your e-mail server's name and assumes that your ISP uses the POP method. If this doesn't work, an "advanced login" lets you designate the server name and protocol type. The only catch: Every message you send contains a small mail2web advertisement at the end. Also, mail2web does not offer spam blocking and other advanced features.

Web mail accounts. An alternative is to use Web mail only to respond to e-mail messages. Yahoo!, Hotmail, and other providers offer free Web mail accounts in exchange for posting advertisements alongside your e-mail message. You also need to check mail at least once a week or your account will be deactivated.

Paid accounts, which cost about \$20 annually, offer spam blocking and more e-mail storage space than free accounts.

Web mail-only accounts cannot work without Internet access-meaning you will go without e-mail if your ISP is not working. Also, saving e-mail to your computer is cumbersome, as each message must be saved as a text file.

Many mobile phone carriers deliver Yahoo! and Hotmail to your cell phone via a short message service, but users pay approximately 25 cents to access each message.

### WIRELESS INTERNET

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Accessing e-mail via a wireless Internet connection is another option.

Many retailers provide wireless Internet access free or for a fee. (See "Wireless Internet 101," CURRENT PSYCHIATRY, [December 2003](#)). Also, some public locations such as New York's Bryant Park offer free wireless Internet as a public service.<sup>2</sup> Personal digital assistants or notebook computers with wireless capability, such as the Tungsten TC or the Toshiba e800, are best suited to this type of access.

Dial-up Internet service is possible over your cell phone. Most mobile phone carriers charge extra for data transmission, and you will need a specific cable to connect your phone to your computer. Bluetooth wireless technology can eliminate the need for cables but beware: Data transfer is much slower with Bluetooth than with other methods.

Third-generation networks (3G)-higher-speed protocols that allow faster data transmission for multimedia-have been touted as the next best service from mobile phone providers. Wireless devices such as the [Palm Treo](#) or the Research in Motion [BlackBerry](#) are specifically designed for this type of access. Monthly data service costs approximately \$30 for unlimited downloads or less when bundled with a voice plan. Access is limited to the cellular coverage area, however.

Wireless access protocol, an alternative to 3G, lets you access e-mail via your mobile phone. This service, available from mobile service providers for an additional monthly fee (about \$10), lets you read mail on the phone screen, but there are several drawbacks:

- Some people may find the text too small to read.
- Text entry via the telephone keypad can be difficult. You either tap a key multiple times to select letters or use word prediction based on letters entered.
- Not all phones available for each carrier can perform this function.

Wireless access protocol is well suited to reading e-mails. To compose an e-mail, however, you need to choose letters by clicking on numbers, which can be very difficult.

## REFERENCES

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