

## Ask Your Doctor Program: Email Coding Specifications

- Maximum recommended mailing “weight” is 100kb, which includes the actual HTML document (20kb or less is ideal) to be delivered and all referenced images (80kb or less is ideal). Minimize mailing weight as much as possible through image optimization, markup refinement, the removal of all embedded comments and indentation, etc.
- Tables – Keep the nesting of tables to a minimum (2-3 deep) or avoid it altogether where possible. Break (vertically) lengthy tables into a series of “stacked” shorter tables. Remember to set table background colors where necessary.
- Characters must be selected from within the US-ASCII character set (printable characters occupying positions 0-127). Replace characters outside this range with suitable proxies or HTML character entities (e.g., &copy; for ©). Additionally, we recommend the use of *HTML Entities* rather than *HTML Numbers*. (Gmail bug).
- Keep COLSPANS and ROWSPANS to a minimum (Gmail issue).
- Layouts should not exceed an email-standard 600px width limit.
- *Do not* rely on **BODY** attributes (i.e. – background image, background color, text color, link color, etc.) or markup present in the HEAD of HTML documents, as web-based clients tend to filter out such layout cues prior to final presentation.
- Do not use **stylesheets** in the HEAD tag (e.g. – Embedded CSS). *Inline* stylesheets are recommended for all email clients for formatting of fonts *only*, not borders, padding or positioning as it is not universal in standardized among email clients and browsers.
- Embedded client-side scripting (JavaScript, etc.) cannot be used as all major email programs and providers filter out any kind of scripting.
- Define table background colors for clients that define a default backgrounds (i.e. - Gmail themes).
- Avoid using forms in email (i.e. - input & search boxes), as they do not function correctly across all email clients. (Does not work at all in MSN/Hotmail and MS Outlook 2007).
- Anchor tags do not work properly in AOL Webmail, anchor links open new tabs in the UI.
- Always specify ALT text for embedded images, especially images conveying information important to the meaning of the mailing (e.g., offer details). Unimportant images (e.g., graphic flourishes) should receive null string ALT attributes (i.e., alt="").
- Verify that all links point to correct, live URLs accessible to the recipients of your mailing.
- Composition of HTML documents with Microsoft Office and WYSIWYG editors (i.e. – GoLive, FrontPage, Dreamweaver, etc.) products is **strongly** discouraged.
- Note that most email clients do not display images by default. Users have to either click “Show images” at the top of the email or change their mail preferences.
- Note that Outlook '07 does not display background images in tables (<table>) or table cells (<td>).
- Use <br><br> in place of <p> tags.
- Use of FLASH elements **cannot** be implemented because all clients will suppress them. Instead, we recommend a link to a webpage containing the intended FLASH animation.
- **To Remember.....No CSS, HTML 4.1 standard, No background images, Encode special characters, No div tags**

**Questions? Concerns? Just ask your salesperson or:**

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