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Diagnostic Test Results: Leaving a Telephone Message

Here is a question from one of our members:

Q: *May we leave diagnostic test results on the patient's telephone answering machine or with whoever answers the phone at the number provided by the patient?*

A: If the patient specifically gives you written or verbal permission to do so, it is permissible to leave a message on a telephone answering machine. CAP's Risk Management & Patient Safety department recommends that you take the following steps:

- When the results are normal, identify which physician office is calling and state either "Mr./Ms. Jones, your test results are normal," or "please tell Mr./Ms. Jones that his/her test results are normal."
- When test results are abnormal, do not leave a message either on a machine or with a person that says "your test results are abnormal." Instead, simply state, "Mr./Ms. Jones, please call our office for your test results," or "please ask Mr./Ms. Jones to call our office for his/her test results."

Authored by
Ann Whitehead, RN, JD
CAP Risk Management & Patient Safety Department

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