

Online Discussions Netiquette and Terms of Use

Use

The American Dietetic Association (ADA) manages electronic mailing lists to promote networking and sharing of information and expertise among members. Opinions expressed by participants on the list are not necessarily the views of the ADA, and ADA is not responsible for information posted by participants. While ADA will from time to time monitor the content of messages on the lists, it does not select or edit material posted by list participants prior to its posting. Participants are urged to use their professional judgment in evaluating the appropriateness and nature of the information posted.

Usage Guidelines

The following Guidelines are intended to preserve the purpose and intent of the electronic mailing lists. Anyone who participates in the lists is expected to read and abide by the Guidelines in all communications. **Any breach of these Guidelines will be grounds for removal from the mailing lists.**

1. All participants must conduct themselves within the bounds of professionalism, courtesy and respect. While disagreements and differences of opinion are encouraged, no one may engage in personal attacks or criticism that has the effect of disparaging or insulting any individual. Inflammatory comments, taunting, and baiting are prohibited.
2. The following topics and subject matter are unacceptable, must not appear in messages on the lists, and may in some instances constitute violations of the ADA Code of Ethics:
 - a. Discussions of price, fees, or reimbursement amounts (which, as noted by ADA's General Counsel, may create the risk of antitrust exposure to the ADA and to participants);
 - b. Abusive, threatening, defamatory or libelous comments;
 - c. Pornographic, obscene or sexual materials or references;
 - d. Inappropriate comments or references with respect to race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or ethnic background;
 - e. Religious solicitations;

- f. Profanity;
 - g. Illegal or unethical practices; or
 - h. Advertising, promotions, or endorsements of commercial products or services.
 - i. Advertisement is defined as promoting a seminar that names specific products such as an infomercial or emails with specific product by name in which a company or individual obtains financial benefits. It is acceptable to answer an inquiry with a specific product name."
3. A participant must not send or upload material to the list that is or may be protected by copyright unless written permission from the copyright owner has been obtained. Participants may, however, provide a brief summary or review of a copyrighted article and/or, in most cases, the URL where the material may be found.
 4. All messages posted to the list are, except where otherwise indicated, intended to be viewed only by members of the list, other ADA members and ADA staff, and should be treated as confidential. Except for messages clearly intended for broad circulation, such as those requesting professional assistance or publicizing job openings or opportunities, no message should be forwarded to or shared with an unintended recipient without the author's permission. Members of the list must also refrain from giving access to the list to non-members.
 5. List participants must not utilize the lists for purposes that cause injury or damage to ADA or that are directly detrimental to ADA's interests. While constructive criticism and open discussion are appropriate, distortions, false statements, misrepresentations, or deceptive practices are not. Participants should state clearly that opinions expressed on matters of public interest are their personal views and not those of ADA.
 6. Discussion lists are a value-added service of the ADA, and they are owned by ADA for use by its members. ADA reserves the right to remove offending or offensive messages from the List and to bar any participant who violates these Guidelines. The following process shall apply to addressing potential violations:
 - Complaints or inquiries about possible violations may be raised by members or staff who become aware of them. ADA reserves the right to designate staff personnel to monitor the lists from time to time.
 - The initial decision to act upon any violations, or any complaints about list participants' conduct, will depend upon the severity of the violation and will be made by the CEO of ADA.
 - Where action beyond a letter of warning to the violator is recommended and called for, such as removal of the participant from the list or referral to the Ethics Committee, the decision will be

referred to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors for consideration and action.

Netiquette

The following are additional points of conduct and protocol that will improve the experience of all participants in the lists. Adherence to these suggested practices is strongly encouraged.

1. Unless responding to a message in which the author has specifically asked for private replies, a participant should send any reply to the list so the response is shared. Addressing a copy to the sender is usually not required, but is acceptable.
2. A participant should include a descriptive subject line in each posting. If using the digest mode and wishing to respond to a post, the participant should be sure to use a subject header that matches the original post. A participant should sign every message with the name, organization, phone number and e-mail address of the sender. Promotional tag lines should be kept to a minimum.
3. Where it is appropriate to reply only to the original sender, as with "me too" or "I agree" messages, the participant should refrain from replying to the entire list unless the message will be of interest to the majority of contributors to the ongoing discussion.
4. The language of a written message can be ambiguous and subject to different interpretations. Each participant should carefully consider the phrasing and choice of language in his or her message to ensure that the intended message is conveyed. Although the list is private and confidential, all participants should also consider the effect of their message if publicly distributed or read by a third party.
5. A participant should refrain from sending jokes/chain letters/junk mail, religious messages, or spam, as well as e-mail attachments that might contain viruses or virus warnings. In addition, each participant has an obligation to other participants to take appropriate steps to avoid the spread of viruses through the list, including the installation of virus protection on all computers by which the list is accessed.