

Security of information in the practice

Australian privacy legislation applies to all personal health information recorded in electronic and paper records. All records must be kept secure to protect against unauthorised access. This practice complies with these requirements to protect your information.

Electronic communication media

When sending referrals to other health professionals our practice uses a secure encrypted program.

Email is not secure, so patients are normally not able to obtain advice or information related to their care by email unless the doctor determines that a face to face consultation is unnecessary.

Access to your health information

You may ask practice staff about any aspect of your healthcare, including information contained in your record. You can request access to your medical record and any other information the practice records about you.

If you request access to your medical record, your doctor will need to consider if there may be a risk of physical or mental harm to you or any other person that may result from disclosure of your health information. Your doctor may need to remove any information that will affect the privacy of other individuals.

Sharing information is important for good communication between you and our practice staff. Your doctor is able to provide a full explanation of the health summary or medical record you are given.

Depending on what is involved, you may be asked to contribute to the cost of providing the information.

Direct marketing

This practice does not engage in direct marketing.

Resolving concerns with the privacy of your health information

If you have any concerns regarding the privacy of your personal health information or the accuracy of the information held by the practice, you should discuss these with practice staff. Inaccurate information can be corrected, or your concerns noted in your record. For legal reasons, the original notes will be retained.

Contacts

If you have questions or a complaint about the privacy of your personal information, please ask to speak to the privacy contact officer at the practice.

Further information on privacy legislation is available from:

- The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner:
1300 363 992 | www.oaic.gov.au
- The Health Complaints Commissioner:
1300 582 113 | <https://hcc.vic.gov>
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Patient Privacy Brochure

Keeping Your Information Private

Current as at: July 2021 | Next Review: July 2022

Purpose

This pamphlet explains how personal information about you and your health is recorded and managed in our practice. We also have a written privacy policy describing how we manage personal information. You can receive a copy of our policy free of charge upon request or access it via our practice website.

Personal information

The 'personal information' we collect includes your name, date of birth, address, contact details, Medicare number, healthcare identifiers and health fund details. Medical information may include medical history and any care you may need. Doctors need information about your past and present health in order to provide you with high-quality care. Our practice follows the guidelines of the RACGP's *Handbook for the management of health information in general practice, 3rd edition* (the Handbook). The Handbook incorporates federal and state privacy legislation, and the Australian Privacy Principles, which requires that your personal information is kept private and secure.

Your medical records

We take steps to ensure that your medical records:

- are accurate, complete, well-organised and legible;
- are up to date;
- contain enough information to allow another doctor to care for you;
- contain a summary of your care;
- can be used to remind you, with your permission, to return for follow up, check-ups and reviews.

If you are uncertain why information is being requested, please ask your doctor or the practice staff.

If you wish to remain anonymous while accessing healthcare services, please talk to the practice staff.

Providing your information to others

Doctors respect your right to decide how your personal information is used or shared. For example, this may be sharing your health information with specialist doctors. Personal information that identifies you will only be sent to other people with your consent, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Gaining your consent is the guiding principle used by this practice in using and sharing your information.

Our practice will not share your personal health information with anyone else unless:

- you have consented to this sharing; or
- we are legally obliged to disclose the information, in which case your doctor will first discuss with you the information legally requiring disclosure; or
- the information is needed for you to obtain Medicare payments or other health insurance rebates; or
- there is an overriding public health and safety interest in the release of the information.

In the above cases, only information needed to meet the requirements will be provided.

Where health information must be disclosed to a third party, our practice considers what information is relevant for the proposed purpose. Patients will reasonably expect the disclosure of only the necessary subset of their health information, along with third-party access restrictions. We only forward patient information that relates to the condition for which the referral is being made. Prior to disclosing any health information, our practice carefully examines authority for disclosure and seeks advice where necessary.

Your health information will not normally be sent overseas unless:

- you are informed and provide consent for this to occur; and
- the overseas country receiving the information has privacy laws that are very similar to the Australian Privacy Principles.

Providing your information to other doctors

In this practice, it is normal for all doctors to have access to your medical records. If you have any concerns about this, please discuss with your doctor or practice staff. Medical histories are required, and identities need to be confirmed before a doctor makes a diagnosis or can prescribe medications. Doctors are obliged by law to report communicable diseases and child abuse.

It is important that others involved in your care, such as medical specialists, are informed of the relevant parts of your medical history, so they can provide the best care. Your health care may experience detriment if you wish to remain anonymous, with previous test results unavailable to our doctor and further tests not possible.

Using health information for quality improvement and research

This practice may use patient health information to assist in improving the quality of care we give to all our patients, by reviewing the treatments used in the practice.

Your information held by the practice may be used in research projects to improve healthcare in the community; however, this information will not include data that can identify you.

The information used for research, including the publication of research results, will not be in a form that would allow you to be identified, unless the research serves an important public interest. In such cases, identifiable medical records can be used for medical research without your consent under guidelines issued by the Australian Government. Before providing such identified information, your doctor will discuss with you the information that she or he is obliged to disclose.