

Patient Communication Policy

Our practice is committed to communicating with patients in a respectful, timely, confidential and accessible manner. We use a range of communication methods to support safe, high-quality care while protecting your privacy and personal health information.

How We Communicate

In Person

You can communicate with our doctors, nurses and reception team during your visit to the practice. Staff will always respect your privacy and maintain the confidentiality of your personal information.

Telephone

Our practice can be contacted by telephone during the following hours:

- Monday to Friday: 7:30 am – 6:00 pm
- Saturday: 9:00 am – 4.00 pm
- Sunday: 8:30 am – 1:30pm

Outside these hours, an automated message provides information about after-hours medical care and emergency services. The practice does not operate a voicemail service.

When you telephone the practice, reception staff may ask questions to determine the urgency of your request and ensure you receive appropriate assistance. To protect your privacy, staff will confirm your identity with a 3-point identity check before discussing any information.

Doctors are generally unable to take telephone calls while consulting with patients. If you need to speak with your doctor, reception staff will arrange a telehealth appointment where appropriate or send a secure message to your doctor. If your request is clinically significant, it will be documented in your medical record and responded to as appropriate.

If your condition is urgent or you are experiencing a medical emergency, please call **000** immediately.

Email

Email is not considered a secure method of communication and should not be used for urgent medical concerns.

By choosing to communicate with the practice by email, you acknowledge and accept the privacy risks associated with email communication. Your email will be treated as consent for the practice to respond via email unless you advise us otherwise.

The practice aims to respond to routine email enquiries within one business day. Response times may vary depending on staff availability and the nature of your enquiry. Due to this we discourage patients emailing the practice. Please do not send requests for clinical advice via email.

Where sensitive personal or health information is sent by email, the practice will take reasonable steps to protect your information, including password protection or secure electronic messaging where appropriate.

SMS (Text Messages)

The practice may send SMS messages for:

- Appointment confirmations
- Health and preventative care reminders
- Recall notices and clinical reminders
- Clinical Communication – results and clinical messages
- Information relating to upcoming appointments – health awareness – leaflets and database search

Please ensure your mobile phone number is kept up to date.

We will ask for your permission prior to sending any SMS notifications

If another person has access to your mobile phone, the confidentiality of SMS messages cannot be guaranteed.

Post

Where SMS or electronic communication is unavailable or unsuitable, the practice may send letters for appointment reminders, recalls or other important correspondence. Post is sent as registered letters.

Incoming mail received by the practice is securely scanned into your medical record and reviewed by your doctor where appropriate.

Fax

Although fax communication is used infrequently, incoming clinical information is securely received, added to your medical record and reviewed promptly by your doctor. Urgent clinical information is brought to the immediate attention of an available doctor.

Outgoing faxes are checked carefully before transmission to ensure they are sent to the correct recipient.

Practice Website

Our website is regularly updated and provides current information including:

- Practice contact details
- Opening hours
- Location
- Fees
- Services provided
- Online appointment booking
- After-hours care arrangements
- Other useful practice information

Communication for Patients with Additional Needs

We are committed to providing equitable access to healthcare for all patients.

Interpreter and communication services can be arranged when required, including:

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- National Relay Service (NRS)
- National Interpreter Booking Service (NABS)
- Auslan interpreting services
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

Please let reception know if you require an interpreter or additional assistance when making your appointment.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The practice takes reasonable steps to protect your personal information in accordance with Australian privacy legislation.

Before discussing personal or health information by telephone or electronic communication, staff will verify your identity requesting 3 identifiers.

Communication methods such as email and SMS carry some privacy risks. By choosing to use these services, you acknowledge these risks.

Medical Advice

Reception staff are not clinically trained and cannot provide medical advice, interpret test results or discuss your medical condition.

If you require medical advice, please make an appointment with your doctor or nurse. If your condition is urgent, please advise reception so your request can be appropriately managed.

In a medical emergency, call 000 immediately.

Keeping Your Contact Details Current

To ensure we can communicate with you effectively, please advise the practice promptly if your:

- Mobile phone number changes
- Home address changes
- Email address changes
- Emergency contact details change

Accurate contact information helps us provide reminders, recalls and important information relating to your healthcare.

Patient Consent

By providing your contact details, you consent to the practice communicating with you using the methods you have nominated, unless you advise us otherwise.

You can provide signed consent if that is your preference, please speak with reception staff.

You may withdraw your consent for SMS or email communication at any time by notifying reception. We will record this in your medical file.