



1.1. Communication with patients by electronic means

1.1.1. Policy

Our practice is mindful that even if patients have provided electronic contact details, they may not be proficient in communicating via electronic means and patient consent needs to be obtained before engaging in electronic communication. Electronic communication includes email, facsimile and Short Message Service (SMS).

Communication with patients via electronic means is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy.

When information is required to be sent via email to a patient the policy of the practice is for the patient to email the practice on each occasion giving consent for the information to be sent to that email address as a reply.

1.1.2. Procedure

Our practice's primary reason for communicating electronically to patients is to issue appointment reminders and we verify the correct contact details of the patient at the time of the appointment being made.

Whilst not encouraged, our practice allows patients an opportunity to obtain advice or information related to their care by electronic means, but only where the general practitioner determines that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary and that communication by electronic means is suitable. Our practice will only provide information that is of a general, non-urgent nature and will not initiate electronic communication (other than SMS appointment reminders) with patients. Any electronic communication received from patients is also used as a method to verify the contact details we have recorded on file are correct and up-to-date.









Communication with patients via electronic means is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy. Before obtaining and documenting the patient's consent, patients are fully informed through information contained in our Privacy Policy of the risks associated with electronic communication in that the information could be intercepted or read by someone other than the intended recipient.

In the instance that patient information is required to be sent via email practice staff advised patients of the requirement for them to email the practice requesting the email first.

Our practice also has an automatic email response system set up so that whenever an email is received into the practice, the sender receives an automated message reinforcing information regarding these risks.

When an email message is sent or received in the course of a person's duties, that message is a business communication and therefore constitutes an official record. Patients are informed of any costs to be incurred as a result of the electronic advice or information being provided, and all electronic contact with patients is recorded in their health record.

All members of the practice team are made aware of our policy regarding electronic communication with patients during induction, and are reminded of this policy on an ongoing basis. They are made aware that electronic communications could be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others. Each member of the practice team holds full accountability for emails sent in their name or held in their mailbox, and they are expected to utilise this communication tool in an acceptable manner. This includes, but is not limited to:

-  Limiting the exchange of personal emails
-  Refraining from responding to unsolicited or unwanted emails
-  Deleting hoaxes or chain emails
-  Not opening email attachments from unknown senders
-  Virus checking all email attachments
-  Maintaining appropriate language within electronic communications
-  Ensuring any personal opinions are clearly indicated as such, and
-  Confidential information (e.g. patient information) must be encrypted.



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Our practice reserves the right to check an individual's email accounts as a precaution to fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by members of the practice team. Inappropriate use of the email facility will be fully investigated and may be grounds for dismissal.

The practice uses an email disclaimer notice on outgoing emails that are affiliated with the practice stating:
The information transmitted within this email is intended only for the person or entity to which it is addressed. This email may contain proprietary, business-confidential, privileged material or confidential health information. If you are not the intended recipient of this message, be aware that any use, review, retransmission, distribution, reproduction or any action taken in reliance upon this message is strictly prohibited. If you received this in error, please contact the sender and destroy all records of this transmission.



1.2. Using social media in our practice

1.2.1. Policy

'Social media' is defined as online social networks used to disseminate information through online interaction. Regardless of whether social media is used for business related activity or for personal reasons, the following standards apply to members of our practice team, including general practitioners. Practitioners and team members are legally responsible for their postings online. Practitioners and team members may be subject to liability and disciplinary action including termination of employment or contract if their posts are found to be in breach of this policy.

1.2.2. Procedure

Our practice has appointed a social media officer with designated responsibility to manage and monitor the practice's social media accounts. All posts on the practice's social media websites must be approved by this person.

When using the practice's social media, all members of our practice team will not:

- 🚫 Post any material that: Is unlawful, threatening, defamatory, pornographic, inflammatory, menacing, or offensive
Infringes or breaches another person's rights (including intellectual property rights) or privacy, or misuses the practice's or another person's confidential information (e.g. do not submit confidential information relating to our patients, personal information of staff, or information concerning the practice's business operations that have not been made public), Is materially damaging or could be materially damaging to the practice's reputation or image, or another individual, Is in breach of any of the practice's policies or procedures
- 🚫 Use social media to send unsolicited commercial electronic messages, or solicit other users to buy or sell products or services or donate money
- 🚫 Impersonate another person or entity (for example, by pretending to be someone else or another practice employee or other participant when you submit a contribution to social media) or by using another's registration identifier without permission
- 🚫 Tamper with, hinder the operation of, or make unauthorised changes to the social media sites,
- 🚫 Knowingly transmit any virus or other disabling feature to or via the practice's social media account, or use in any email to a third party, or the social media site
- 🚫 Attempt to do or permit another person to do any of these things:
- 🚫 Claim or imply that you are speaking on the practice's behalf, unless you are authorised to do so
- 🚫 Disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the practice, or to any third party that has disclosed information to the practice
- 🚫 Be defamatory, harassing, or in violation of any other applicable law
- 🚫 Include confidential or copyrighted information (e.g. music, videos, text belonging to third parties), and
- 🚫 Violate any other applicable policy of the practice.



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All members of our practice team must obtain the relevant approval from our social media officer prior to posting any public representation of the practice on social media websites. The practice reserves the right to remove any content at its own discretion.

Any social media must be monitored in accordance with the practice's current policies on the use of internet, email and computers.

Our practice complies with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) national law, and takes reasonable steps to remove testimonials that advertise our services (which may include comments about the practitioners themselves). Our practice is not responsible for removing (or trying to have removed) unsolicited testimonials published on a website or in social media over which we do not have control.

Any social media posts by members of our practice team on their personal social media platforms should:

- 👤 Make it clear that anything that they are posting is their personal view and is no way related to the practice or business that they are employed by.
- 👤 Respect copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms.

Social media activities internally and externally of the practice must be in line with this policy.