

Email Use Policy

Our practice is mindful that even if patients have provided electronic contact details, they may not be proficient in communicating via email and patient consent needs to be obtained before engaging in electronic communication via email. Communication with patients via email is conducted with appropriate regard to privacy.

Procedure

Whilst not encouraged, our practice allows patients an opportunity to obtain advice or information related to their care by email, but only where the general practitioner determines that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary and that communication by email is suitable. Our practice will only provide information that is of a general, non-urgent nature and will not initiate email communication (other than SMS appointment reminders) with patients. Any email 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.

Before obtaining and documenting the patient's consent, patients are fully informed through information contained in the practice privacy policy of the risks associated with email communication in that the information could be intercepted or read by someone other than the intended recipient. 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 email communication with patients during induction, and are reminded of this policy on an ongoing basis. They are made aware that email 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. Email attachments from unknown senders are not to be opened.
- Virus checking all email attachments.
- Maintaining appropriate language within electronic communications. Ensuring any personal opinions are clearly indicated as such.
- Confidential information (e.g. patient information) must be encrypted.

Our practice reserves the right to check an individual's email account 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

Disclaimer notice: *The contents of this email message and any attachments are intended solely for the addressee(s) and may contain confidential and/or privileged information and may be legally protected from disclosure. If you are not the intended recipient of this message or their agent, or if this message has been addressed to you in error, please immediately alert the sender by reply email and then delete this message and any attachments. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any use, dissemination, copying, or storage of this message or its attachments is strictly prohibited.*