

Personal Information, Privacy and your Doctor

'Your Privacy Is Our Business'

Providing your information to others

Your doctor will not disclose your personal health information to a third party unless:

- You have consented to the disclosure:
- This disclosure is necessary because you are at risk of harm without treatment and you are unable to give consent – for example you may be unconscious
- Your doctor is legally obliged to disclose the information – such as notification of certain infectious diseases or suspected child abuse, a court order or subpoena
- The information is necessary to obtain Medicare payments or other health insurance rebates
- There is an overriding public health and safety interest in the release of the information.

There are times when disclosure is necessary for the doctors in the practice to carry out a review of their practice for the purpose of improving the quality of care provided and the activity has been approved under Commonwealth or State legislation. This provides safeguards to protect the confidentiality of the information provided.

In any of the above cases only information which is necessary to achieve the objective will be provided.

Your Access to your Health Information

You have access to the information contained in your medical record. You may ask your doctor about any aspect of your healthcare including information on your record. We believe that sharing information is important for good communication between you and your doctor and for good healthcare.

Information in your record can be provided by way of an accurate and up to date summary of your care – for example if you are moving away or transferring to a new doctor.

The transfer of records is done directly to your new medical clinic. Generally a cost is associated with the transference of medical records.

If you request direct access to your full medical record, your doctor will need to consider the risk of any physical or mental harm to you or any other person which may result from disclosure of your health information, and may need to remove any information that may impact on the privacy of other individual patients by reviewing the treatments used in the practice.

Your Medical Records

Your doctor will do his/her best to make sure that your medical records:

- 1 are accurate , comprehensive , well organised and legible
- 2 are up to date
- 3 have enough information to allow another doctor to care for if he/she is unavailable
- 4 do not contain offensive or irrelevant comments about you
- 5 contain a summary of your care
- 6 can be used to remind you, with your permission, to return for follow-up, check ups and reviews.

Your doctor will only collect information which is relevant to your medical care. If you are uncertain as to why information is being requested, ask your doctor.

Security of Information in the Practice

We ensure that your personal information that is on the computer system is kept private through use of passwords and restricted access. Any paperwork is not left within sight of unauthorised personnel and is stored in locked cabinets when not in use.

This will protect your record from unauthorised access.

Using your health information for quality improvement and research.

We 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.

We may also use information that does not identify you in research projects to improve health care in the community. You will normally be informed if your information is to be used for this purpose and will have an opportunity to refuse to have unidentified information used in this way.

Wherever practicable, the information used for research will not be in a form that would enable you to be identified. The publication of research results which use your information will never be in a form that enables you to be identified. In some circumstances, where the research serves an important public interest, identifiable medical records can be used for medical research without your consent under guidelines issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council. This research must be approved by an official ethics committee.

Your Personal Health Information

Your doctor needs information about your past and present health in order to provide you with high quality care. This practice will make sure that you are able to discuss your health with your doctor in private.

Information is called **personal health information** if it concerns your health, medical history or past or future medical care and if someone reading it would be able to identify you.

This practice follows the guidelines of the "Handbook for the Management of Health Information in Private Medical Practice". The Handbook was produced by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges with the support of the General Practice Computing Group. The Handbook incorporates the provisions of Federal and State Privacy Legislation. This means that your personal health information is kept private and secure. This practice has a written policy on personal health information – this policy is available to all patients for inspection.

Providing your Information to other doctors

The doctors in this practice respect your right to decide how your personal health information is used or disclosed (for example to other doctors). In all but exceptional circumstances, personal information that identifies you will be sent to other people only with your consent. Gaining your consent is the guiding principle.

In this practice it is customary for all doctors to have access to all the medical records. If you have any concerns about other doctors at this practice being able to see your records you may discuss your concerns with your doctor. It is important that other people involved in your care – such as other doctors, nurses or health professionals – are informed of relevant parts of your medical history so they can best care for you. If you have any concerns about this, discuss with your doctor.

eHealth Privacy

If you are registered with the eHealth program, an electronic summary of your key health information such as prescribed medication, allergies and treatments can be uploaded and/or viewed by Healthcare Providers. You can control who has access to your eHealth record, what information they can see and what records are uploaded.

You can discuss with your healthcare provider at any time as the type of information you consent to have on your eHealth record.

Resolving your concerns regarding the privacy of your health information

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

Further information on Privacy Legislation is available from :

Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner
1300 363 992
Office of the Health Services Commissioner (Vic)
1800 136 066
Community and Health Services Complaints Office (ACT)
02 6205 2222