

# North Geelong Medical Clinic Privacy Policy

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Current as of: 10/07/2024

## Introduction

We are committed to protecting the privacy of patient information and to handling your personal information in a responsible manner in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), the Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012, the Australian Privacy Principles and relevant State and Territory privacy legislation (referred to as privacy legislation).

This privacy policy is to provide information to you, our patient, on how your personal information (which includes your health information) is collected and used within our practice, and the circumstances in which we may share it with third parties.

From time to time we may make changes to our policy, processes and systems in relation to how we handle your personal information. We will update this Privacy Policy to reflect any changes. Those changes will be available on our website and in the practice.

## What is a Patient Health Record?

A Patient Health Record is the information held about a patient, in paper or electronic form, which may include:

- contact and demographic information
- medical history
- notes on treatment
- observations
- correspondence
- investigations
- test results photographs
- prescription records
- medication charts
- insurance information
- legal information and reports
- work health and safety reports

## How do we collect your personal information?

We collect information that is necessary and relevant to provide you with medical care and treatment, and manage our medical practice. This information may include your name, address, date of birth, gender, health information, family history, credit card and direct debit details and contact details. This information may be stored on our computer medical records system and/or in handwritten medical records.

We collect information in various ways, such as over the phone, in writing, in person in our clinic or over the internet or videoconferencing if you transact with us online or engage in telehealth. This information may be collected by medical and non-medical staff.

Our practice will collect your personal information:

1. When you make your first appointment our practice staff will collect your personal and demographic information via your registration.
2. During the course of providing medical services, we may collect further personal information. Information may be collected through Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (eTP) or through the MyHealth system via a shared health summary or event summary.
3. We may also collect your personal information when you visit our website, send us an email or SMS, telephone us, make an online appointment or communicate with us using social media.
4. In some circumstances personal information may also be collected from other sources. Often this is because it is not practical or reasonable to collect it from you directly. This may include information from:
  - your guardian or responsible person
  - other involved healthcare providers, such as specialists, allied health professionals, hospitals, community health services and pathology and diagnostic imaging services
  - your health fund, Medicare, or the Department of Veteran's Affairs (as necessary).

### **Why do we collect, use, hold and share your personal information?**

Our practice will need to collect your personal information to provide healthcare services to you. Our main purpose for collecting, using, holding and sharing your personal information is to manage your health. We also use it for directly related business activities, such as financial claims and payments, practice audits and accreditation, and business processes (eg staff training).

The information we will collect about you includes:

- names, date of birth, addresses, contact details
- medical information including medical history, medications, allergies, adverse events, immunisations, social history, family history and risk factors
- Medicare number (where available) for identification and claiming purposes
- healthcare identifiers
- health fund details.

Our practice management software will automatically generate a list of medications and health conditions to be included in health summaries and referrals. It is our practice to ensure that only clinically relevant information is passed on, so at times information will be removed from these lists to ensure patient confidentiality is maintained.

### **How do we store and protect your personal information?**

Your personal information may be stored at our practice in various forms as paper records, electronic records or in a visual format such as photos relevant to health treatment for example skin lesions.

Our practice stores all personal information securely. All electronic information is stored in protected information systems and any hard copy information is stored in a secure environment and only accessible to authorised persons. All staff and contractors sign confidentiality agreements and understand their obligations in relations to information privacy, confidentiality and security.

Where it is necessary to conduct a telehealth consultation from our doctors' private premises they will take reasonable steps to maintain a private and secure environment to conduct such consultations.

## Who do we share your personal information with?

We will treat your personal information as strictly private and confidential. We will only use or disclose it for purposes directly related to your care and treatment, or in ways that you would reasonably expect that we may use it for your ongoing care and treatment. For example, the disclosure of blood test results to your specialist or requests for x-rays.

We sometimes share your personal information:

- with third parties who work with our practice for business purposes, such as accreditation agencies or information technology providers – these third parties are required to comply with APPs and this policy
- with other healthcare providers
- when it is required or authorised by law (eg court subpoenas)
- when it is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to a patient's life, health or safety or public health or safety, or it is impractical to obtain the patient's consent
- to assist in locating a missing person
- to establish, exercise or defend an equitable claim
- for the purpose of confidential dispute resolution process
- when there is a statutory requirement to share certain personal information (eg some diseases require mandatory notification)
- during the course of providing medical services, through Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions (eTP), MyHealth Record (eg via Shared Health Summary, Event Summary).

Only people that need to access your information will be able to do so. Other than in the course of providing medical services or as otherwise described in this policy, our practice will not share personal information with any third party without your consent.

We will not share your personal information with anyone outside Australia (unless under exceptional circumstances that are permitted by law) without your consent.

We may also from time to time provide statistical data to third parties for research or quality improvement purposes.

Our practice will not use your personal information for marketing any of our goods or services directly to you without your express consent. If you do consent, you may opt-out of direct marketing at any time by notifying our practice in writing.

## Why and when your consent is necessary?

When you register as a patient of our practice, you provide consent for our GPs and practice staff to access and use your personal information so they can provide you with the best possible healthcare. Only staff who need to see your personal information will have access to it. If we need to use your information for anything else, we will seek additional consent from you to do this.

## Dealing with us anonymously

You have the right to deal with us anonymously or under a pseudonym unless it is impracticable for us to do so or unless we are required or authorised by law to only deal with identified individuals. Ways you could contact us anonymously include posted letter, phone call, or using the suggestion box located at the table in the reception area.

## Patient access to care

Please refer to our Practice Information Sheet for information regarding Opening Hours and After Hours & Emergency Care.

### **How can you access and correct your personal information at our practice?**

You have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information.

Our practice acknowledges patients may request access to their medical records. We prefer you to put this request in writing but if this is not possible you may make this request verbally and fill out the Request for Personal Health Information form. We shall acknowledge this request within 7 days and respond within 30 days. There may be a fee for the administrative costs of retrieving and providing you with copies of your medical records. We may deny access to your medical records in certain circumstances permitted by law, for example, if disclosure may cause a serious threat to your health or safety. We will always tell you why access is denied and the options you have to respond to our decision.

Our practice will take reasonable steps to correct your personal information where the information is not accurate or up-to-date. From time-to-time, we will ask you to verify your personal information held by our practice is correct and up-to-date. You may also request that we correct or update your information, and you should make such requests in writing to the practice manager Christina Stephenson at [christina@ngmc.com.au](mailto:christina@ngmc.com.au).

### **How can you lodge a privacy related complaint, and how will the complaint be handled at our practice?**

We take complaints and concerns regarding privacy seriously. You should express any privacy concerns you may have in writing. We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with our resolution procedure. If you are dissatisfied with our handling of a complaint or the outcome you may make an application to the Australian Information Commissioner or the Privacy Commissioner in your State or Territory. Please forward any privacy related complaints to the practice manager Christina Stephenson at [christina@ngmc.com.au](mailto:christina@ngmc.com.au).

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