

# Privacy & Patient Information Policy, for Patients

## Introduction

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.

## 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.

## 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).

## What personal information do we collect?

The information we will collect about you includes your:

- 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.

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## How do we collect your personal information?

Our practice may collect your personal information in several different ways.

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 can also be collected through electronic transfer of prescriptions (eTP), My Health Record, eg via Shared Health Summary, 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 Veterans' Affairs (as necessary).

## When, why and with whom do we share your personal information?

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
- Provide de-identified data to the Murray PHN about patient demographics, health condition types, Medicare items billed
- 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

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- 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 eTP, My Health Record (eg via Shared Health Summary, Event Summary).

Only people who 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 informed and written consent.

On occasion, a third party may request access to a patient's personal health information (e.g. an Insurance company for a medical report or a solicitor requesting information for their client); this must be made in writing from the requesting third party and must contain the patient's written consent and the date of the request.

In certain cases, we may need to discuss with the patient / guardian that they understand what information has been requested from a third party and any possible implications of this, before the information is released (e.g. an insurance company requesting a patient's entire medical record rather than relating to a specific relevant medical condition).

Under exceptional circumstances, medical information may need to be released for legal reasons.

This may include:

- Under Court order
- Subpoena or Warrant
- Instruction from the Coroner's Court to assess cause of death.
- Reporting communicable diseases that relate to Public Health.

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

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

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practice in writing.

Our practice may use your personal information to improve the quality of the services we offer to our patients through research and analysis of our patient data.

We may provide de-identified data to other organisations to improve population health outcomes. The information is secure, patients cannot be identified and the information is stored within Australia. You can let our reception staff know if you do not want your information included.

## Third Party Present During a Consultation

Patients may wish to have a family member or support worker attend their consultation, in this situation verbal consent will be requested from the patient and the details of the third party present recorded in the medical record.

On occasion, a medical student or doctor in training to be a GP may be present during the consultation for education and training; in such cases, written consent will be requested in advance of the consultation. This consent will not be asked for during the consultation to avoid any undue pressure to accept.

For certain examinations and procedures, it may be necessary to have a chaperone present; this will usually be the Practice Nurse. Ideally, consent will be obtained before the consultation when possible. Where a chaperone is not available, it may be necessary to arrange another appointment to allow for this.

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

Your personal information is stored as electronic data on our secure computer system. This is password protected and encrypted. We follow best practice for Information Communication Technology to minimize the risk of security breaches.

Personal information that is sent to us by hard copy (e.g. clinic letter, results) will be converted to an electronic copy; the hard copy will then be destroyed securely as confidential waste.

Personal health information that is sent to us electronically is encrypted at both ends and follows the strict Privacy Laws demanded by Legislation.

All staff and contractors of the clinic and other services using the same building as the Practice have signed confidentiality agreements.

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## 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 require you to put this request in writing and our practice will respond within a reasonable time; normally within 30 days, barring any exceptional circumstances. You may be required to pay a fee for this, to cover administration costs in producing a copy of your medical records.

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 that your personal information held by our practice is correct and current. You may also request that we correct or update your information, and you can make such a request in writing, or by informing our reception or clinical staff during your appointment.

## Transfer of Patient Medical records to and from another Medical Practice

New patients registering with practice will be asked to transfer their previous medical records from their previous medical clinic, if needed, as part of the registration process, allowing us to provide best medical care.

Patients wishing to transfer their care to another medical practice can do so through their new practice submitting a request with the patient's and new provider's signatures to take on their medical care.

Alba Health complies with The Privacy Act 1988 and Australian Privacy Principles and will respond to requests made within 30 days and are subject to administration fees being paid.

## 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 to:

- The Practice Manager, Alba Health, 153 Myrtle Street, P.O. Box 507,

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Myrtleford, Vic. 3737.

We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with our resolution procedure, ideally within 30 days, barring any exceptional circumstances.

You may also contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC). Generally, the OAIC will require you to give them time to respond before they will investigate. For further information visit [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au) or call the OAIC on 1300 363 992.

## Privacy and our website

No personal information is collected via our website but is connected to Google analytics for broad range stats.

## Policy review statement

This Policy is reviewed annually.

**Would you like a copy to take home? Please ask reception for a copy.**

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