

# Privacy Policy

## Introduction

We are committed to providing comprehensive, quality care to all individuals and families who attend our Practice. 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 GP's 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 high quality 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.

## What is a patient health record?

A health record includes information about an individual's medical history, treatments, medications, allergies, test results, and other health-related information. It can be a combination of electronic and paper-based records, depending on the healthcare provider's systems and practices. Health records in Australia are governed by privacy laws, such as the Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), which regulate how personal information, including health information, is collected, used, and disclosed by healthcare providers. These records are crucial for providing quality healthcare, continuity of care, and ensuring patient safety and privacy.

## 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.

## 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.

## **How and when 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 (e.g. electronic transfer of prescriptions (eTP), My Health Record (Shared Health Summary, Event Summary)).
3. We 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?**

In order to provide the highest quality of care for our patients we may be required to share your information. 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 consent.

### **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 APP's and this policy
- with other healthcare providers
- when it is required or authorised by law (e.g. 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 (e.g. some diseases require mandatory notification)
- during the course of providing medical services, through electronic transfer of prescriptions (eTP), My Health Record (e.g. via Shared Health Summary, Event Summary)
- de-identified data to parties like the Primary Health Networks (PHN) for the purpose of quality improvement.

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 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.

Our clinical software allows the practice to ensure that only relevant information from your medical record is included within referral letters to other health professionals or third parties.

### **Use of Document Automation Technologies**

As part of our commitment to privacy and data protection, we employ document automation technologies to streamline and enhance the accuracy of our referral letters while ensuring that only relevant medical information is included.

#### **How We Use Document Automation Technologies:**

*Data Filtering:* Our document automation systems are designed to filter patient data, including medical history, immunisations, diagnoses, and treatment plans, to include only the information necessary for the specific referral purpose.

*Custom Templates:* We utilise customised templates within our document automation software to ensure that each referral letter contains standardised and essential information, reducing the risk of including extraneous or sensitive details.

*Access Controls:* Access to our document automation systems is strictly controlled and limited to authorised personnel.

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

Our patient records are maintained in electronic format on a secure on-site computer system. The information recorded is protected by an individual password system and is accessible only to authorised personnel. Paper based information is converted to electronic format and is destroyed by shredding when no longer required.

Our staff are bound by a strict legal duty of confidentiality. It is an offence for our staff to give information about you to anyone except under limited circumstances set out in legislation. We maintain strict security policies and practices with respect to who has access to personal information about you.

Consent is obtained for real time audio/visual recording, duplication, and storage of a consultation, including those via telehealth or those conducted remotely.

### **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. Any request to access personal information must be made in writing to the practice via email or in person.

If personal information is provided to you as the result of a request, you will be charged a fee for costs incurred in providing that information such as photocopying, the administration time involved in processing your request, and postage. Please seek advice from our reception staff regarding fees associated with receiving personal records.

There may be instances where we cannot grant you access to the personal information we hold; however, we will only do so in accordance with our rights and obligations under the Privacy Act. For example, we may need to refuse access if granting access would interfere with the privacy of others or if it would result in a breach of confidentiality. If that happens, we will give you written reasons for any refusal.

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. Any requests to correct or update personal information may be made in person or in writing to the practice.

### **How can you lodge a privacy-related complaint, and how will your 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 and address it to the Practice Manager. We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with our resolution procedure and endeavor to respond to within 14 days. Our contact details are:

ADDRESS: Launceston Health Hub  
247 Wellington Street  
Launceston 7250

PHONE: 03 6388 8111

FAX: 03 6380 8388

EMAIL: [info@launcestonmc.com.au](mailto:info@launcestonmc.com.au)

You may also contact the 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**

Please note that our website uses 'cookies'. Cookies are pieces of information that a website transfers to your computer's hard disk for record-keeping purposes, website usage statistics or to provide enhanced functionality on the site. Our cookies may do some or all of these depending on the particular page and its functionality. Generally, the information obtained by cookies is de-identified and does not constitute personal information but may include the IP address of your computer.

You are ultimately in control of your browser's dealings with cookies. Most browsers are by default set to accept cookies but have the capacity to block or delete them. However, if you do not wish to receive any cookies you should set your browser to refuse cookies. In some instances, this may mean you will not be able to take full advantage of parts of our website. By using our website, you accept the use and installation of these cookies to provide you with these services.

Personal information collected through our website runs directly through Hotdoc is electronically stored directly into our practice software. This information is kept private and is not displayed anywhere public. To view how Hotdoc utilise your private information, please visit their respective websites:

[www.hotdoc.com.au](http://www.hotdoc.com.au) / [www.cubiko.com.au](http://www.cubiko.com.au)

### **Policy review statement**

This Privacy Policy is current as of March 2024 and is reviewed annually. From time to time, we may make changes to our policy, processes, and systems in relation to how we handle your personal information. Any changes made to our policy will be made available on our website and at our practice.