



Privacy Policy

Current as of: **01/09/2023**

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 explains how we collect, use and disclose your personal information, how you may access that information and how you may seek the correction of any information. It also explains how you may make a complaint about a breach of 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.

Scope

This policy applies to the patients and staff at Toowoomba Medical Centre

Purpose and objectives

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. Wherever practicable we will only collect information from you personally. However, we may also need to collect information from other sources such as treating specialists, radiologists, pathologists, hospitals and other health care providers.

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

In emergency situations we may also need to collect information from your relatives or friends.

We may be required by law to retain medical records for certain periods of time depending on your age at the time we provide services. This policy's purpose is to inform you and make clear our processes in the clinic and how we handle your confidential information.

Policy content

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 that 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 (e.g., 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

How your personal information is communicated

Your personal information is corresponded via several communication modes including:

- Fax
- Australia Post
- Courier
- Secure Messaging Services
- Email (not a preferred method)

It is the practice's policy that we do not send patient information via email (or accept correspondences) as the identity of the patient cannot be verified. If a patient wishes to communicate with the practice via email, they are required to have their consent recorded in their file. It is also preferable that the patient forwards an email to the practice confirming the email address they wish communications to be directed to.

For privacy reasons, the preferred communication method with other practitioners and specialists is via Medical Objects. This practice utilizes Medical Objects Secure Messaging as the means for real time point-to-point communication of clinical correspondence between medical practitioners and specialists.

If a specialist or practitioner does not use Medical Objects, then communication is sent via Fax, Australia Post or Courier.

Who is your personal information is shared 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.

There are circumstances where we may be permitted or required by law to disclose your personal information to third parties. For example, to Medicare, Police, insurers, solicitors, government regulatory bodies, tribunals, courts of law, hospitals, or debt collection agents. We may also from time to time provide statistical data to third parties for research purposes.

We may disclose information about you to outside contractors to carry out activities on our behalf, such as an IT service provider, solicitor or debt collection agent. We impose security and confidentiality requirements on how they handle your personal information. Outside contractors are required not to use information about you for any purpose except for those activities we have asked them to perform.

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 authorized by law to only deal with identified individuals.

How do we collect your personal information

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

When you make your first appointment our practice staff will collect your personal and demographic information via your registration.

During the course of providing medical services, we may collect further personal information. This may be collected through electronic transfer of prescriptions (eTP), e-pathology, or My Health Record (e.g., via Shared Health Summary, Event Summary, etc.)

We may also collect your personal information when you visit our website, send us an email or SMS, telephone us, or make an online appointment.

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

- 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 eTP, e-pathology, My Health Record (e.g., 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 consent.

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.

Data and Security

We will take reasonable steps to ensure that your personal information is accurate, complete, up to date and relevant. For this purpose, our staff may ask you to confirm that your contact details are correct when you attend a consultation. We request that you let us know if any of the information we hold about you is incorrect or out of date. Personal information that we hold is protected by:

- ▶ securing our premises;
- ▶ placing passwords and varying access levels on databases to limit access and protect electronic information from unauthorised interference, access, modification and disclosure; and
- ▶ providing locked cabinets and rooms for the storage of physical records.

Your personal information may be stored at our practice in various forms, including paper records, electronic records, and visual records (X-rays, CT scans, videos and photos).

Our practice stores all personal information securely. Our electronic records are password protected, hard copy files are stored in a secured environment and all staff and contractors are required to sign confidentiality agreements before obtaining access to these records. We will not transfer your personal information to an overseas recipient unless we have your consent, or we are required to do so by law.

Access and correction your personal information at our practice

You have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information. If you believe that the information, we have about you is not accurate, complete or up to date, we ask that you contact us in writing (see details below).

Our practice acknowledges patients may request access to their medical records. We require you to put this request in writing (please ask reception staff for our information request process) and our practice will respond within 30 days. Obtaining access to your entire patient record may incur a processing fee.

You are entitled to request access to your medical records. We request that you put your request in writing, and we will respond to it within a reasonable time.

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 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 should make such requests in writing or at the front desk via our reception staff.

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

If you have a complaint about the privacy of your personal information, we request that you contact us in writing. Upon receipt of a complaint, we will consider the details and attempt to resolve it in accordance with our complaints handling procedures.

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. 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. You may contact us via email at reception@toowoombamedicalcentre.com.au, via post at Toowoomba Medical Centre, 146 Drayton Road, Toowoomba, QLD 4350, or phone (07) 4635 6111. We will respond to your complaint or concern within 30 days.

You may also contact the OAIC. Generally, the OAIC will require you to give them time to respond before they investigate. For further information visit www.oaic.gov.au or call the OAIC on 1300 363 992.

Privacy and our website

When using our practice website to request an appointment you are required to enter some personal details for our staff to contact you to arrange and confirm an appropriate appointment time. The information that is collected from this website is only disclosed to this practice and is stored under the same conditions as any other information collected.

Policy review statement

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.

Document Title	Privacy Policy	Version #	1
Effective Date			
Version #	Change Description	Introduced	
1	Original document	2020	
2	Review	2023	