

Gastroenterology Specialist Care Privacy & Collection of Information Policy

**This Privacy Policy applies to Gastroenterology Specialist Care and all
Practitioners associated with Gastroenterology Specialist Care.**

Privacy

Our practice is committed to best practice in relation to the management of information we collect. This practice has developed a policy to protect patient privacy in compliance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) ('the Privacy Act').

Our policy is to inform you of:

- the kinds of information that we collect and hold, which, as a medical practice, is likely to be 'health information' for the purposes of the Privacy Act
- how we collect and hold personal information
- the purposes for which we collect, hold, use and disclose personal information
- how you may access personal information and seek the correction of that information
- how you may complain about a breach of the Australian Privacy Principles and how we will deal with such a complaint
- whether we are likely to disclose personal information to overseas recipients

Collection of personal information

As a patient of our medical practice we collect relevant and necessary information such as contact information, personal details, health information and medical history, so that we may properly assess, diagnose, treat and be proactive in your health care needs, as well as for the management of our Practice, such as for billing purposes and reminders regarding your health care and management.

The information collected as part of the medical consultation will be contained in the medical record and used only to assist in the comprehensive assessment and management of the patient. You may gain access to your information on request. This information may be stored on our computer medical record system and/or in handwritten medical records.

Wherever practicable we will only collect information from you personally, however occasionally we may collect information from other sources such as other health care providers, medical practices, or hospitals. Information may be collected by medical or non-medical staff of our practice, in written or verbal format.

We endeavour to ensure that your personal information is accurate, complete, up to date and relevant. We request that you advise if any of the information we hold about you is incorrect or out of date. We require your consent to collect personal information about you and to use the information you provide in the following ways:

- Disclosure to others involved in your care including treating doctors, specialists outside this medical practice. This may occur through referral to other doctors, or for medical tests and in the reports or results returned to us following referrals.
- Disclosure to other doctors in the practice, locums etc. attached to the practice for the purpose of patient care and teaching.
- For research and quality assurance activities to improve individual and community health care and practice management.
- To comply with any legislative or regulatory requirements eg. notifiable diseases.

You can decline to have your health information used in all or some of the ways outlined above but this may influence our ability to manage your health care and to provide the best outcome for you.

What kinds of personal information do we collect?

We require personal information on the patient and also the person responsible for accounts (if different to the patient).

The type of information we may collect and hold includes:

- The patient and account holder's name, address, date of birth, email and contact details
- Medicare number, DVA number and other government identifiers for the patient and account holder
- Other health information including, but not limited to:
 - notes of the patient's symptoms or diagnosis and history of treatment given
 - the patient's specialist reports and test results
 - the patient's appointment and billing details
 - the patient's prescriptions and other pharmaceutical purchases
 - the patient's healthcare identifier
 - any other information about the patient's race, sexuality or religion, when collected by a health service provider

How do we collect and hold personal information?

We will generally collect personal information:

- from the patient holder directly. This might be via a face-to-face discussion, telephone conversation, written document or online form
- from a person responsible for the patient
- from third parties where the Privacy Act or other law allows it - this may include, but is not limited to, other members of the patient's treating team, diagnostic centres, specialists, hospitals, the My Health Record system, electronic prescription services, Medicare, health insurer, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

Why do we collect, hold, use and disclose personal information?

In general, we collect, hold, use and disclose the patient's personal information for the following purposes:

- to provide health services to the patient
- to communicate with the patient in relation to the health service being provided
- to comply with our legal obligations, including, but not limited to, mandatory notification of communicable diseases or mandatory reporting under applicable legislation
- to help us manage our accounts and administrative services, including billing, arrangements with health funds, pursuing unpaid accounts, management of our ITC systems
- for consultations with other doctors and allied health professionals involved in the patient's healthcare
- to obtain, analyse and discuss test results from diagnostic and pathology laboratories
- for identification and insurance claiming
- To liaise with the patient's health fund, government and regulatory bodies such as Medicare, the Department of Veteran's Affairs and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) (if a privacy complaint is made to the OAIC), as necessary.

How can you access and correct personal information?

Patients have a right to seek access to, and correction of the personal information which we hold about them, in accordance with the Victorian Health Records Act 2001. [Note: a fee may be applicable for the provision of medical records, in accordance with the Victorian Health Records Act 2001].

We ask that you put the request in writing, and we will respond to it within a reasonable timeframe.

We may deny access to medical records in certain circumstances permitted by law, for example, if disclosure may cause a serious threat to the patient's health or safety. We will always tell you why access is denied and the options you have to respond to our decision.

How do we hold personal information?

Our staff are trained and required to respect and protect patient privacy. We take reasonable steps to protect information held from misuse and loss and from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. This includes:

- securing our premises
- strong password protections applied and varying access levels on databases to limit access and protect electronic information from unauthorised interference, access, modification and disclosure
- document retention and destruction policies and procedures

Privacy related questions and complaints

If the patient has any questions about privacy-related issues or wishes to complain about a breach of the Australian Privacy Principles or the handling of personal information by us, a complaint should be submitted in writing to Gastroenterology Specialist Care (see below for details).

We will normally respond to the request within 30 days. If you are dissatisfied with our response, you may refer the matter to:

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)

Phone: 1300 363 992

Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

Website: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/individuals/how-do-i-make-a-privacy-complaint>

Anonymity and pseudonyms

The Privacy Act provides that individuals must have the option of not identifying themselves, or of using a pseudonym, when dealing with our practice, except in certain circumstances, such as where it is impracticable for us to deal with the patient if they have not identified themselves.

In medical practices it is largely impracticable to deal with patients anonymously or via a pseudonym. The provision of medical services is likely to be impacted, and billing via Medicare or a health insurer where applicable is likely to be impracticable.

Overseas disclosure

If necessary, we may disclose the patient's personal information to the following overseas recipients:

- any practice or individual who assists us in providing services (such as where the patient has received treatment overseas or has continuing treatment from an overseas provider) In this case, we will seek written consent for the disclosure
- anyone else to whom the patient or account holder authorise us to disclose it

Updates to this Policy

This Policy will be reviewed from time to time to take account of new laws and technology, changes to our operations and other necessary developments.

Updates will be publicised on the practice's website. The current version of the policy has been updated on 1/8/23.

Contact details for privacy related queries

Practice Manager

Gastroenterology Specialist Care

PO Box 153

SOMERVILLE VIC 3912

Ph. 03 7023 0230

Fax: 03 9102 9774

Email: practicemanager@gastrosc.com.au