

# Florence St Family Practice Privacy Policy

## 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. This includes using your personal information for the purposes of reminders and recalls. If you do not wish to receive reminders or recalls please discuss opting out with your doctor who may remove you from our recall system. We also use your personal information for directly related business activities, such as: financial claims and payments, practice audits, 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, ethnicity, contact details, emergency contact details,
- Medical information including medical history, medications, allergies, adverse events, immunisations, social history, family history, risk factors and notes made during the course of medical consultations.
- Medicare number (where available) for identification and claiming purposes, healthcare identifiers for the My health record and health fund details.
- Correspondence from other health service providers.
- Results and reports received from other health service providers eg: pathology and radiology

## 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 do we collect your personal information?

Our practice team 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 through other health providers and through ehealth services such as My health record and electronic transfer of prescriptions.
3. We may also collect your personal information when you visit our website, send us an email, fax 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 other healthcare providers for the purposes directly related to your ongoing care and treatment.
- 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 the Australian Privacy Principles and this policy
- 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 electronic medical services, through eTP, e RMS or My Health Record
- Administrative purposes eg: billing and accounts for workers compensation claims

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.

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

Your personal information may be stored at our practice in various forms i.e electronically, as paper records, and visual records (X-rays, CT scans). We are required by law to retain medical records for certain periods of time depending on your age at the time we provide services.

Our practice stores all personal information securely this includes: Locking the premises, storing records in locked or staff only areas, placing passwords and varying access levels on databases to limit access and protect electronic information from unauthorised interference, access, modification and disclosure. Additionally, our staff is bound by strict confidentiality agreements as a condition of employment.

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

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.

You also have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information. We request that you let us know as soon as possible, if any of the information we hold about you is incorrect or out of date.

Our practice acknowledges patients may request access to their medical records.

Accessing your health information may be as simple as requesting a copy of your latest pathology results from your doctor during a medical consultation. However, more often than not, accessing your health information will involve far more work from our staff. We advise that if you wish to view your personal information held at this practice you will need to collect and complete a **“request for access form”** - available at reception. That way all requests for access are dealt with fairly and efficiently.

Applicants will be required to consent to undertake and be bound by the terms of the **“request for access form”**. The total time between the receipt of a request for access and the time when access is granted shall not, ordinarily, exceed 30 days.

Where practicable, a consultation with the doctor to help you go through the contents of your file and address any concerns you may have is recommended. Please check fee charges for consultation and/or photocopying with reception staff as there is no Medicare rebate for this service and it attracts a GST.

Copies of requested information are required to be collected in person and you may be required to provide identification (preferably a photo licence).

If you are transferring to another doctor it is best practice to send a summary of your relevant personal information directly to the doctor concerned. A “**transferring patient medical record**” form is required to be completed. Patients are charged a fee for this service, please enquire at reception.

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

If you have a complaint about our medical services or the privacy of your personal information, we request that you first contact the doctor concerned verbally or in writing. Patients are also encouraged to use our suggestion box.

Written complaints should be addressed to Dr Le Marne and marked “*private and confidential*”. Upon receipt of a complaint we will consider the details and attempt to resolve it in accordance with our complaints handling procedures. We will endeavour to address complaints within 60 days of receipt.

We take complaints and concerns regarding privacy seriously. If you are dissatisfied with our handling of a complaint, you may 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 / facebook page**

Patients can register on our website which involves collection of basic personal information – contact details etc. This information is independent of any information held at Florence St family practice and there is no facility to communicate with patients through this medium.

Facebook has an instant messaging feature, where private messages can be sent directly to and from individuals. Our practice **DOES NOT** directly communicate with patients or followers of the practice’s Facebook page via the messaging feature as it may breach patient privacy and confidentiality and is not a secure line of communication. Patients are encouraged not to use this feature.

#### **Use of cookies on our website**

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. We may use this information for additional functionality or to analyse usage patterns.

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 our website.

By using our website, you accept the use and installation of these cookies to provide you with these services.

#### **The Spam Act and the Do Not Call Register Act 2006**

We comply with the Spam Act 2003 (Cth) and the Do Not Call Register Act 2006 (Cth). Unless you have indicated you do not wish to receive information from us, we may contact you on your nominated phone number, email, fax or other address for such purposes as: appointment reminders, recalls of abnormal pathology results and reminders for relevant health checks eg: pap smears, flu shots etc. If you do not wish to receive reminders or recall notices please discuss opting out with your doctor who may remove you from the recall system if practicable.

#### **Policy review statement**

This privacy policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is in accordance with any changes that may occur. A new policy statement will be displayed if amended at reception and on our website.