

Merewether Ridge Street Surgery

GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

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Merewether Ridge Street Surgery Privacy policy

Current as of: **October 2021**

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.

If at any time we make reference to your '*Patient Health Record*', we are referring to all information we have collected or created for you. This includes your personal information, Consult notes, Pathology results, referrals and billing information.

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 needs 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. This includes requesting notes from your previous GP, we will only do this with your written consent if requested by you or the GP.

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.

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 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 form.

2. During the course of providing medical services, we may collect further personal information. This may include information from the My Health Record.
3. We may also collect your personal information when you send us an email or SMS, telephone us or make an online appointment.
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
- 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
- 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 My Health Record (eg via Shared Health Summary, Event Summary).
- De-identified data is shared with the Primary Health Network in order to meet with the requirements of the Quality Improvement PIP.

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.

Occasionally research institutions request access to patient information. On such occasions we may send out invitations to you on behalf of researchers but we do not pass patient details to researchers without specifically obtaining consent.

Occasionally the practice receives requests for information from other parties such as insurance companies. This practice will disclose personal health information to third parties if we are provided with a signed consent document. (Such consents are generally included in an insurance application.)

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 is stored on the computer. Such information is only accessible to authorised doctors and staff of this practice. Electronic records are protected by data security systems, which include firewalls,

password protection, encryption and multiple backup systems.

Any paper documents (aka letters or reports) are kept in a secure location and under supervision at all times. Paper documents will be scanned as soon as practicable and will be shredded.

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 (a form can be requested from the Front Desk) and our practice will respond within 30 days.

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 to our Practice Manager (Anna Lambert) or another receptionist.

Transferring your notes to another practice

If you wish to have your information forwarded to another practice we require a signed consent from you or your legal guardian. This form can be obtained from the new practice you wish to attend.

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. We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with our resolution procedure. All complaints should be sent to the Practice Principal in writing, either via posting it to us at 54 Ridge Street, Merewether or emailing us at surgery@ridgestreet.com.au (please note that any information sent via email is not classed as medically secure).

You may also contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (or 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 or call the OAIC on 1300 363 992.

Privacy and our website

As far as we are aware, our website will not collect or store any personal information. Please note that any information you choose to email us is not considered medically secure and you do this at your own risk. We will not send your personal information via email without your consent.

Policy review statement

This privacy policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it is in accordance with any changes that may occur. The next review is scheduled to take place in October 2022. We will inform patients of any changes to the policy via a notice in our waiting room and a notice on our website.