

Patient Electronic Contact Policy and Procedure



Email can be used by a practice to transmit information outside the practice.

Ideally communication should be via secure messaging or encryption but this is generally not possible when emailing patients.

The practice has an obligation to take reasonable steps to protect the privacy and security of information it holds including when it is transmitted or disclosed outside the organisation.

The practice follows the RACGP recommendations to reduce the risk of interception of data and sending emails to incorrect addresses, including:

- use of passwords for sensitive information
- verification of the patient's email address
- obtaining patient consent
- use of secure messaging facilities between practices where available

Our practice has in place an automatic response in place advising that emails will be responded to within two business days (see attachment below).

The reception team is responsible for monitoring and managing responses to all emails received.

The practice must;

- * Obtain and document consent from the patient to send an email message.
- * Ensure that email address is recorded in the patient's record.
- * Limit the personal/private information contained in the email message (do not include any without patient's prior consent).
- * Store the email messages in the patient's record.

Procedure

Request for information to be sent via email

If a patient requests information to be sent by email, the practice:

1. Explains to the patient that email is not a secure form of communication
2. Seeks the patient's consent to use email and asks the patient to provide the email address they would like the practice to use (in the same way the practice asks for a contact phone number)
3. Sends the patient an email containing the following wording:

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"You have requested that we send your Medical Certificate by email. Email is not a secure way to transfer information. There is a risk that on emailing this information, the information could be intercepted. This will be outside the control of North East Family Medicine, North East Family Medicine take no responsibility for a breach of confidentiality if you request the details to be sent via email. If you wish the documents to be sent by email, please reply to this message stating that you have read and understand this text and give your consent for the documentation to be sent via email."

4. Upon receiving patient consent in response to the above email, print the email to PDF format and upload to patient file. You can then email the private information that was requested.

The practice should document the patient consent and maintain a record of information sent via email to the patient in accordance with the email policy.

The practice advises patients on our website and verbally not to send clinical information via email.

An automatic reply message is set up and says the following (also see attachment below):

"Thank you for your email. If you are experiencing an emergency, please dial 000 immediately.

We aim to reply to all emails within 2 business days.

Please do not send clinical requests about medical information particularly those that are time critical as we can not respond to them in this way."

We encourage patients to phone the practice or make an appointment to discuss clinical issues."

The reception staff are responsible for monitoring incoming email from the website link.