
PRIVACY AND INFORMATION 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 doctors 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. 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 and obstetric 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.
2. During the course of providing medical services, we may collect further personal information. Information can also be collected through electronic transfer of prescriptions and My Health Record.
3. We may also collect your personal information when you visit our website, send us an email 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 general practitioners, 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, 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.

Our practice may use your personal information to improve the quality of the services we offer to our patients through research and analysis of our patient data.

We may provide de-identified data to other organisations to improve population health outcomes. The information is secure, patients cannot be identified, and the information is stored within Australia. You can let our reception staff know if you do not want your information included.

How do we store and protect your personal information?

Your personal information may be stored at our practice in various forms. E.g. paper records, electronic records, visual records (ultrasound, X-rays, CT scan images and videos).

Our practice stores all personal information securely.

Electronic format:

- Password protection & authentication: all systems that store personal information are protected by

strong, complex passwords that are changed regularly. Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is used whenever possible to enhance security.

- Access controls: access to personal data is role-based and limited to authorised personnel only. User permissions are reviewed regularly to ensure only those who require access have it.
- Encryption: sensitive data is encrypted both in transit and at rest.
- Secure networks & firewalls: firewalls, intrusion detection systems and antivirus software are employed to protect systems from unauthorised access and malware threats.
- Regular backups & updates: data is backed up regularly to secure, off-site or cloud-based servers with encryption. Systems and applications are updated frequently.

Hard copy format:

- Secure storage: the limited hard copy records we hold containing personal information are stored in secure, access-controlled areas.
- Document handling & disposal: physical documents are not left unattended and are securely disposed of through certified document destruction services when no longer needed.

Staff and contractor confidentiality

- Confidentiality agreements: all staff and contractors sign confidentiality agreements as part of their onboarding process, which clearly outline their responsibilities in handling personal information.
- Monitoring and auditing: logs and audit trails are maintained for access to sensitive information, and periodic audits are conducted to ensure compliance with internal policies and legal requirements.

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 via email and our practice will respond within a reasonable time.

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 to the practice manager.

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. Any complaints regarding this privacy policy, collection and/or use of information collected by us should be directed to the practice manager via email to admin@canberraobs.com.au. We will comprehensively investigate any complaints made and attempt to resolve any breach that may have occurred in relation to the collection, use or destruction of personal information held by Canberra Obstetric in accordance with the Commonwealth Privacy Legislation. If you are not satisfied with the way it is investigated or the outcome of the procedure then you may request an independent person to further investigate your complaint. This is usually the Commonwealth Privacy Officer.

Privacy and our website

We will only collect your personal information through our website (such as your email address or other contact details) if you submit an online enquiry to us directly. We will only use this information for the purposes for which you have provided it and in accordance with our privacy policy and relevant privacy laws.

Policy review statement

We review this Privacy Policy regularly to ensure it remains accurate and up to date with any changes in our practices, legal obligations or relevant regulations. When amendments are made, Canberra Obstetric will notify patients through direct communication such as email or in-practice notices. We encourage all patients to review the Privacy Policy periodically to stay informed about how we protect your personal information.