

Coffs and Moonee Medical Centre Privacy Policy 3.1

Introduction

Coffs and Moonee Medical Centre is dedicated to protecting the privacy and security of personal health information. This Privacy Policy outlines how personal data is collected, used, and safeguarded in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Consent

Upon registration as a patient, consent is requested for General Practitioners (GPs) and practice staff to access and use personal information to provide optimal healthcare services. Access to personal information is limited to those staff members who need it to deliver care. Any additional use of personal data will require further consent.

Why is Personal Information Collected, Used, Held, and Shared?

Personal information is necessary for providing healthcare services. The primary purpose of collecting, using, holding, and sharing personal information is to manage healthcare. Additionally, personal information may be used for related business activities, such as financial claims, practice audits, accreditation, and business processes (e.g., staff training).

Information Collected

The information collected includes:

- **Personal Information:** Names, date of birth, addresses, contact details, Medicare number, and health identifiers. Personal information will be regularly checked to ensure it is up to date.
- **Medical Information:** Medical history, medications, allergies, treatment records, test results, and other health-related data.

Dealing with the Practice Anonymously

Patients have the right to interact with the practice anonymously or under a pseudonym unless it is impractical or the practice is required or authorised by law to deal with identified individuals.

How Personal Information is Collected

Personal information may be collected through:

- **First Appointment:** During initial registration, staff will collect personal and demographic information, either verbally or through written or electronic means.
- **Medical Services:** Additional personal or medical information may be collected during healthcare visits.
- **Electronic Methods:** Information may also be collected via electronic transfer of prescriptions (ETP), the My Health Record system, or through the transfer of medical records from previous clinics.
- **Online Interactions:** Personal information may be collected when visiting the practice website, sending emails or SMS, making phone calls, or booking online appointments.
- **AI Transcription Tools:** General Practitioners may use **AI-powered transcription services (Scribe)** to assist in generating consultation notes. These tools are used to improve accuracy and efficiency in documentation. Information processed through AI tools is handled in compliance with Australian privacy laws, and only authorised staff have access to the generated notes. Patients are informed of this process, and consent is sought where required.
- **Other Sources:** In certain circumstances, personal information may be collected from:
 - Guardians or responsible persons
 - Other healthcare providers (e.g., specialists, allied health professionals, hospitals, community health services, pathology, and diagnostic imaging services)
 - Health funds, Medicare, or the Department of Veterans' Affairs (if necessary)

How Personal Information is Sent and Received

Medical correspondence is exchanged via secure clinical software using ADHA (Australian Digital Health Agency)-approved messaging systems. Secure messaging is conducted through platforms such as Best Practice, Health Link, and encrypted online platforms like HotDoc for patient communication.

With patient education and consent, some correspondence may be transmitted using less secure electronic methods, including:

- General email
- Email secured with a non-ADHA-approved certificate
- Electronic faxing
- Unsecured web-based forms

Sharing Personal Information

Personal information may be shared in the following circumstances:

- **With Patient Consent:** Information shared only with explicit patient authorisation.
- **For Treatment Purposes:** Information shared with other healthcare providers involved in patient care.
- **For Billing and Insurance:** Shared with insurance providers or billing companies.
- **As Required by Law:** Information shared to comply with legal requirements or respond to legal processes.
- **In Emergency Situations:** Information shared when necessary to protect the health and safety of patients or others.
- **My Health Record:** Personal information may be shared through the My Health Record system.

Access to personal information is restricted to authorised individuals only. Except for medical services or as otherwise described, personal information will not be shared with third parties without patient consent. The practice does not share information outside of Australia without patient consent unless permitted by law.

How Personal Information is Protected

The practice uses both electronic and paper records. Advanced encryption technologies and secure systems protect electronic data. Paper records are stored securely and shredded when no longer required. All staff and visitors are required to sign confidentiality agreements.

- AI transcription tools are used under strict confidentiality protocols. Data is processed securely, with encryption applied during transfer and storage.
- AI outputs form part of the patient's clinical record and are protected under the same privacy and security standards as all other medical records.
- No personal health information is stored offshore or shared outside of Australia without patient consent unless required or permitted by law.

Patient Rights

- **Access:** Patients have the right to request access to personal health information and obtain copies.
- **Correction:** Patients can request corrections to inaccuracies in medical records.
- **Restriction:** Patients can request restrictions on the use and disclosure of personal information.

Requests must be made in writing, either via a practice form or as part of a consultation.

Data Retention

Personal health information is retained as required by law and for as long as necessary to fulfil the purpose for which it was collected. Once data is no longer needed, it will be securely disposed of.

Changes to This Policy

This Privacy Policy is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the practice or legal requirements.

Contact for Complaints

For questions, concerns, or complaints about this Privacy Policy or how personal information is handled, contact the practice at:

The Practice Manager
 Coffs Medical Centre
 42-44 Gordon Street
 Coffs Harbour 2450
 Email: amandaharrison@coffsmedical.com.au
 Phone: 6648 5222

Please allow up to 30 days for resolution, in accordance with the resolution procedure.

Alternatively, patients may contact the **Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)**. The OAIC will generally require the opportunity to resolve the issue before investigating further. For more information, visit www.oaic.gov.au or call 1300 363 992.