

Communications Policy

Southern Doctors Clinic acknowledges the use of various communication channels by staff to ensure the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients. To maintain patient privacy, our practice makes efforts to obtain patient consent before initiating communication through SMS, email, or other electronic means. Consent for electronic communication is implied if the patient initiates contact with the practice using electronic methods.

Our practice is committed to adhering to the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), the Privacy Act 1988, and any state-specific laws when communicating via electronic means. In accordance with our privacy policy, our staff is obligated to take reasonable measures to safeguard patient information from unauthorised disclosure. For more detailed information concerning patient privacy and confidentiality, please refer to our Privacy Policy.

Telephone

Telephones may be used as a form of communication with external healthcare providers, patients, or other stakeholders.

Patients are able to contact the practice via telephone on (02) 9789 5955 between the hours of 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday. Outside of trading hours, we have a pre-recorded phone message. We do not have a voicemail system.

During the first point of contact, our receptionists will triage your call in to ensure that any urgent matters are dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner. Our receptionists will also perform a three-point identification check to ensure that the patient file correlates to the person on the phone.

Phone calls requested to speak to the GP without an appointment will not be put through at the time of call, unless in the event of an emergency. This is to minimise interruptions to consultations that are taking place. Patients are able to leave a message with reception which will be passed on through our internal messaging system.

Facsimile (fax)

Fax is generally used for clinical correspondence only. Incoming faxes imported to the associated patient's file. These are then reviewed by the addressee doctor and managed as appropriate. Any urgent faxes that are received are handed to the doctor immediately. If the doctor is away, they are immediately reviewed by an available GP.

All outgoing faxes are cross-checked before being sent to ensure that they are being sent to the correct recipient.

Email

Email is not a secure communication platform and therefore, Southern Doctors Clinic does not send any clinical and confidential information via email without patient consent. Whilst we attempt to keep your information secure, it is important that patients are aware of the risks associated with email communication. Information could potentially be compromised and accessed by someone other than the intended recipient.

Although we attempt to keep private and confidential information secure, information sent via email may be compromised and accessed by someone who is not the intended recipient. Due to this, we will not send any personal information via email without patient consent.

Patients must be aware that any information they send to Southern Doctors Clinic via email is not secure. Patients who communicate through email do so at their own risk. Consent for email communication is implied if the patient initiates contact with the practice using email.

We intend to respond to email within 2 business days. Our emails are checked on a regular basis, but they are not consistently monitored. We suggest that any urgent requests are not sent via email but rather discussed with a receptionist via telephone.

SMS

SMS messages are used at our clinic for the following reasons:

- Appointment reminders
- Clinical reminders
- Recalls

Patients are to ensure that they inform the practice of any mobile number changes. Patients are also to be aware that if another person can access their mobile phone, then Southern Doctors Clinic cannot guarantee confidentiality of these communications.

Post

Letters are used for patients who do not use, or who decide to opt-out of electronic communications. In these circumstances, reminders and recalls are sent by post to the patients residential or postal address.

Incoming mail is received daily. Letters that are patient related are scanned and imported into the patient's file. These letters are then reviewed by the doctor and actioned as appropriate. All non-patient letters are forwarded to the appropriate team member.

Website

The practice's website is regularly updated with new information relating to current events and changes at the practice. You are able to find information on opening hours, policies, information regarding fees, services, and book an appointment through our website.

Alternative communication methods

A contact list of translator and interpreter services and services for patients with a disability is maintained, updated regularly and available to all reception staff. These include:

- [National Relay Service \(NRS\)](#)
- [Auslan services](#): 1300 AUSLAN
- [Translation and Interpreter Service \(TIS\)](#): Doctors Priority Line 1300 131 450

Discussing Medical Information

The Practice Manager and reception staff members are not authorised to offer medical advice or engage in discussions related to any medical information through phone, email, or any other communication channel. If you require a discussion regarding your health, you must schedule an appointment with a doctor or nurse.