

Patient Communication Policy

Purpose

This policy explains how Mayfield Medical Connection communicates with patients, including how the practice receives and responds to telephone calls and electronic communications.

The policy supports clear, respectful, accessible and safe communication between the practice and patients and meets RACGP Standard C1.1 requirements.

Scope This policy applies to all patient communications with the practice, including:

- Telephone calls
- SMS messages
- Email communication
- Website enquiries and online bookings
- Social media communication
- Transfer of medical records
- Written correspondence

Telephone Communication

Practice Phone Hours

The practice telephone line is available from 8AM to 12:30PM and from 1:45PM to 4:45PM Monday to Friday.

Outside these hours, callers hear an automated message advising:

- To call 000 in an emergency; and
- Practice opening hours and access information.

Call Answering and Hold Times

On calling, every patient first hears advice to call 000 if they are experiencing a medical emergency.

Our administration team aims to answer calls as promptly as possible.

During busy periods, callers may be placed on hold until a team member becomes available.

Patients are first asked if they are experiencing a medical emergency. They are advised if delays occur and may hear information regarding available services and alternative ways to access care while waiting.

Patients may also:

- Book appointments online;

- Cancel or change appointments online; and
- Request repeat scripts or repeat referrals online where appropriate.

Emergencies

Patients experiencing chest pain, severe shortness of breath, collapse or other medical emergencies should hang up and call 000 immediately.

If a patient advises staff that the matter is urgent, appropriate triage and escalation procedures are followed.

Call Recording and Privacy

Telephone calls may be recorded for quality improvement, training and triage purposes. Patients may advise staff if they have concerns regarding call recording.

Before discussing personal or clinical information by telephone, staff confirm patient identity using identifying details to protect privacy.

Results and Clinical Advice

Some results and clinical matters require an appointment with the treating GP and may not be discussed by reception staff.

Patients are encouraged to book an appointment to discuss:

- Test results;
- Ongoing symptoms;
- Medication concerns; or
- Complex health matters.

Telephone and electronic communication are not substitutes for medical consultations where face to face clinical review is required.

Electronic Communication

Email Communication

Email is not considered a fully secure form of communication.

For privacy reasons:

- Sensitive clinical information is generally not sent by email unless requested by the patient and appropriate consent is obtained;
- Patients requesting email communication are asked to provide written consent, annually; and
- Email should not be used for urgent or emergency matters.

Patients should telephone the practice directly regarding urgent concerns.

SMS Communication

With patient consent, the practice may use SMS messaging for:

- Appointment reminders;
- Recall and reminder notices;
- Appointment changes; and
- General practice communication.

SMS messages are not monitored continuously and should not be used for urgent medical concerns.

Patients should ensure their mobile contact details remain current.

Online Bookings and Digital Services

Patients may access online booking services through the practice booking platform available on the practice website or via the app.

Online services may include:

- Appointment bookings;
- Appointment changes or cancellations;
- Repeat script requests; and
- Repeat referral requests where clinically appropriate.

Urgent matters should not be managed through online requests.

Website

The practice website provides information including:

- Opening hours;
- Practice contact information;
- Practitioner information;

- Fee information;
- Privacy information;
- Patient resources; and
- Online booking access.

The website is primarily for outgoing information and does not provide emergency communication services.

Social Media

The practice maintains social media pages to provide general health information and practice updates. Pages are not monitored for clinical communication.

Patients should not use social media to:

- Seek medical advice, urgent or otherwise;
- Discuss or share personal health information; or
- Request urgent appointments or change appointments.

Patients should contact the practice directly by phone for clinical matters.

Communication Support and Accessibility

The practice aims to provide accessible and inclusive communication.

Patients requiring:

- Interpreter services;
- Additional communication assistance; or
- Support relating to disability or communication needs

are encouraged to advise the practice when booking appointments so appropriate arrangements can be made.

Patient Privacy and Medical Records

The practice takes reasonable steps to protect patient privacy and comply with the Australian Privacy Principles.

Medical records are transferred only after receiving appropriate written authority from the patient.

Further information is available in the practice Privacy Policy.

Respectful Communication

MMC is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful and supportive environment for patients, practitioners and staff.

Aggressive, abusive, threatening or discriminatory behaviour toward team members or others will not be tolerated.

Where behaviour places safety or wellbeing at risk, the practice may take appropriate action, including

ending phone calls or limiting services in line with professional obligations.

Feedback and Complaints

Patient feedback is encouraged and assists the practice to improve services and patient experience.

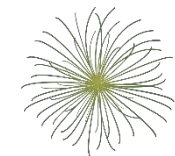
Patients may provide feedback:

- In person;
- By phone;
- In writing; or
- Through the practice suggestion box.

Where contact details are provided, the practice aims to respond within a reasonable timeframe. Responses include information on remedies and quality improvements made due to the suggestion/feedback.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains current and reflects practice communication systems; patient needs and RACGP requirements.



MAYFIELD MEDICAL
CONNECTION