RACGP

Royal Australian College *of* General Practitioners

Privacy and managing health information in general practice



Cairns West Medical Centre

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Privacy policy

Current as of **2025**

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 GPs 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, education/training 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 history, medications, allergies, adverse events, immunizations, social history, family history, and risk factors
- Medicare number (where available) for identification and claiming purposes
- Healthcare identifiers

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 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 (eTP), My Health Record, e.g. via Shared

Health Summary, Event Summary. Our practice participates in these eHealth services.

3. We may also collect your personal information when you visit our website, email us 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 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 a 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.

How do we store and protect your personal information?

Your personal information may be stored at our practice in various forms.

The ways in which our practice stores information includes paper records, electronic records, visual records (X-rays, CT scans, videos, and photos). We do not store audio recordings.

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Our practice stores all personal information securely.

We store and protect personal information securely, in electronic format, in protected information systems or in hard copy format in a secured environment. We use passwords and confidentiality agreements for staff and contractors.

How long are medical records kept?

Cairns West Medical Centre keeps health information for a minimum of 7 years from the date of last entry in the patient records unless the patient is/was a child in which case the record must be kept until the patient attains or would have attained 25 years of age.

How does the practice uses document automation technologies (yours software), particularlyto ensure only relevant medical information is included inreferral letters?

We make sure the patient health summary and medications list are up to date. In the patient letter writer we use a referral template that automatically populates with medical information. The Health Care Professional will then only select necessary clinical summaries & attach pathology/ imaging results if required.

Cairns West Medical Centre does not record or store Telehealth or Audio Visual consultations.

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 to admin@cairnswestmedical.com.au and our practice will respond within a reasonable time (30 days). Fees may be associated with providing this information, only to cover the costs of complying with the request.

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 admin@cairnswestmedical.com.au.

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. You should express any privacy concerns you may have in writing to admin@cairnswestmedical.com.au. We will then attempt to resolve it in accordance with our resolution procedure within 30 days.

You may also contact the OAIC. Generally, the OAIC will require you to give them time to respond before they will investigate. For further information visit www.oaic.gov.au or call the OAIC on 1300 363 992.

Privacy and our website

Cairns West Medical Centre's website www.cairnswestmedical.com.au may contain links to other sites. Please be aware that Cairns West Medical Centre is not responsible for the privacy practices of any linked sites. We encourage users who leave our site to read the privacy statements of each and every linked website that they choose to visit. All

links to external sites are provided for your convenience. The information, products, and advertisements contained in the linked sites are neither approved nor endorsed by Cairns West Medical Centre, and Cairns West Medical Centre is not responsible for such information, products or advertisements.

Your privacy is important to us and we want you to feel comfortable visiting our website.

Any personal information that patients give to us, including email addresses, will be used only in the following ways:

- personal data given to us by you will be securely stored,
- we will not provide your personal data to any third party without your permission,
- we do not automatically collect your personal email address simply because you visit our site,
- if we join with a third party to provide services and you sign up for those services, we will share your name and other contact information necessary for our partner to provide the services to you,
- if you view specific pages or download information from specific pages on our website, we will track and add the number of your visits to the aggregate number of visits by all users in order to better design our website,
- we may share aggregated demographic information with our affiliates. This is not linked to any personal information that can identify you or any other visitor to our website.

By using Cairns West Medical Centre's website, you consent to the collection and use of your personal information as detailed in this Privacy Policy. We will post any changes to this Privacy Policy on our website so that you are kept up to date with the type of information we collect and the ways in which we use it.

Policy review statement

This privacy policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is in accordance with any changes that may occur. Updated to this policy will be available on our website.

Contact information

If you have any queries regarding our Privacy Policy please contact:

Practice Manager
Cairns West Medical Centre
PO BOX 345,
Manunda QLD 4870
admin@cairnswestmedical.com.au

Or by, visiting our website you can submit a compliment, complaint or suggestion at www.cairnswestmedical.com.au

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