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## Policy and Procedure

### ***Patient Electronic Contact via Email- HC***

# Policy

Our practice conducts appropriate patient authorised contacts by electronic means for health management purposes.

Form of electronic communication used:

- SMS
- Email

Email can be used by a practice to transmit information outside the practice.

Ideally communication should be via secure messaging or encryption but this is generally not possible when emailing patients.

The practice has an obligation to take reasonable steps to protect the privacy and security of information it holds including when it is transmitted or disclosed outside the organisation.

The practice follows the RACGP recommendations to reduce the risk of interception of data and sending emails to incorrect addresses, including:

- verification of the patient's email address
- obtaining patient consent
- use of secure messaging facilities between practices where available
- use of passwords for sensitive information

The Practice and Office Managers are responsible for monitoring and managing responses to emails received via the practice website.

# Procedure

### **Request for information to be sent via email**

The practice only communicates via email in exceptional circumstances, with clinicians consent, when an alternative contact method not available or appropriate and these emails are monitored by the Practice and Office Managers.

If a patient requests information to be sent by email, the practice:

1. Explains to the patient that email is not a secure form of communication
2. provide the email address they would like the practice to use (in the same way the practice asks for a contact phone number)
3. Seeks the patient's consent to use email and asks the patient to email the practice to confirm their email address and provide consent for the requested information to be emailed.
4. Informs patient that our email address is not for general patient usage and that further communication needs to be verbal or written. (phone, in person or letter)

The practice only communicates via email if essential. The practice documents the patient consent and a record of information sent via email to the patient in clinical software in accordance with the email policy.

**Related page:**

Request for personal health information

**Helpful resources:**

[Using email in general practice – privacy and security matrix \(RACGP\)](#)