



PATIENT COMMUNICATION POLICY

Introduction

This policy outlines the various methods of communication available to patients of health care providers practicing at St James Family Medical and St James Specialist (Facility). Staff at our facility provide support to the individual practitioners to ensure appointments are correctly booked, and communication between the patient and practitioner is timely and accurate.

This facility follows the guidelines of the RACGP Standards for General Practices (5th Edition) and complies with the Australian Privacy Principles under the Privacy Act 1988.

Communicating by telephone

Patients may ring contact the medical facility via telephone on 08 9352 2910 between the hours of 8:30am to 5:30pm Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and 8:30am to 5pm Wednesday and Friday. The facility is also open approximately one Saturday per month 9am to 12pm, relevant dates can be found on the website and waiting room notices.

Should a caller ring outside of business hours, an informative voice recording will provide advice for after-hours assistance.

In order to maintain patient confidentiality and accurate, up to date patient records, callers will be asked to verify their identity when booking an appointment or requesting information. At least three of the following demographics will be checked:

- Given and family name
- Date of birth
- Address
- Gender
- Individual Healthcare Identifier

If there is a requirement for a caller to be placed on hold, reception staff will first ask if the matter is an emergency. Receptionists may be required to ask questions to ascertain the urgency of medical care required, and they refer to the triage prioritisation guide to ensure the patient receives a timely appointment. From time to time it may be necessary for patients to also speak with the Practice Nurse to determine urgency and the best course of action for the patient's condition or concern.

Doctors and other treating practitioners at the facility offer telephone consultations for existing patients. These appointments may be booked via telephone or using the HotDoc booking program online. If a patient is located more than 15km from the facility, then a video consultation may be offered using Health Direct.

Unexpected phone calls from a patient to a doctor will not generally be transferred to the doctor at the time of their call. This can cause disruption to the care of the patient whom the

doctor is currently consulting with. A brief message may be taken and passed on to the doctor, or the patient can choose to book a telephone consultation if they have a preferred call-back time.

Communicating by electronic means

Patients may choose to send correspondence by email to info@stjamesfamilymedical.com.au and by doing so, this is considered as patient consent for staff and practitioners at the facility to reply via email.

Emails are checked on a daily basis during facility open times. It is the policy of this facility that emails will be responded to within two business days. An auto-reply is sent to all received emails advising:

Thank you for emailing St James Family Medical & St James Specialist.

If you require urgent medical attention, please call 000 or attend your closest emergency department.

The facility open hours are:

- Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 8:30am – 5:30pm
- Wednesday and Friday 8:30am – 5:00pm
- Saturday, on occasion, check HotDoc or website for availability
- Sundays & Public Holidays - Closed

Please note, emails will be responded to within two business days. If you require immediate action regarding the nature of your email, please phone our facility on 9352 2910 during open hours.

Privacy Warning: Email is not a secure form of communication, and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Please be aware that your personal information could potentially be compromised or accessed by someone other than the intended recipient. Patients communicating through email do so at their own risk. By sending an email to info@stjamesfamilymedical.com.au, the facility considers this as patient consent to provide an emailed response.

The facility obtains consent from registered patients on the new patient form, and they are informed that there are risks associated with some methods of electronic communications and that this could compromise their privacy and confidentiality.

Should a patient NOT provide consent, this is noted on the patient's individual health record.

The facility will not send information that may be considered advertising e.g. preventative healthcare or products.

Results

It is the policy of this facility that results are provided by the treating doctor or practitioner either during a face to face or telephone consultation.

In some circumstances, with the permission of the doctor/ practitioner:

- results may be provided verbally by the Practice Nurse
- a copy of the results may be emailed, or printed and posted or collected in person by the patient

Attendance in person

Communication can occur when you attend the facility in person:

- by speaking directly to your treating practitioner
- or during other interactions with the Practice Nurse or administration staff.

Information pertaining to your health will be added to your individual health record.

SMS

SMS messages are sent to patients for the following purposes:

- Appointment reminders – sent 24 hours prior to the appointment (or immediately if booked within 24 hours). Paediatric appointment reminders are sent 5 days prior.
- Health reminders – for repeat preventative health reasons e.g. cervical screening, care plans, immunisations
- Health recalls – when results are received by your treating practitioner and they would like to discuss the results with you

Post

Patients who do not consent to electronic communications (email or SMS) will be sent communications and documentation by post to their nominated postal address.

Incoming mail is opened daily by reception staff and allocated to the relevant treating practitioner's inbox before being saved to the patient's health record

In the event that the treating practitioner is unable to contact the patient by telephone, SMS or email, then a letter will be posted as a final attempt to communicate with the patient regarding an appointment, health reminder or health recall.

Fax

Incoming faxes are processed daily by reception staff and allocated to the relevant treating practitioner's inbox before being saved to the patient's health record.

Website

The facility's website is www.stjamesfamilymedical.com.au and is regularly maintained to ensure the clinic information is current. Patients can find important information on the website including:

- opening hours
- contact information
- clinic fees
- treating practitioners at the facility
- online appointment booking using the "Book an Appointment" button

Other online resources

Patients can also find St James Family Medical by visiting Facebook, HotDoc and Google Business.

Patients with communication needs

For patients who are from a non-English speaking background, your treating practitioner is able to contact the TIS which is a government agency who are available to provide telephone and pre-booked onsite interpreting services during your consultation.

- Translating Service: 1300 575 847
- Speech & Hearing impairment voice call available on 133 677 or Speak and Listen on 1300 555 727.

Policy review statement

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects the current processes and procedures of the Practice and current legislation requirements.