

The GP Clinic Bendigo – Communication Policy

Current as of: 16th March 2026

Name of Communication Policy officer: Practice Manager - Piyush Goyal

Practice – Patient Communication Policy

The GP Clinic Bendigo recognises that different communication channels may be used by staff members to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to patients.

The aim is to facilitate optimal communication opportunities with our patients. We also encourage and support the use of digital technology to enable our patients with 24-hour access to our appointment system. The practice allows patients to book their healthcare appointment with their preferred healthcare provider online via the booking page or direct with Automated.

The practice endeavours to provide patients with access to timely advice or information about their clinical care. This communication can occur through the following channels:

Results

It is the practice policy that results will be given out during a follow up consultation with a doctor only.

Face-to-face Communication

This can be via consultation with your doctor or nurse or interactions with other staff members. For example, the Practice Manager or reception staff.

Telephone

Patients are able to contact the practice via telephone between the hours of 8:30am – 5:00 pm Monday to Friday by calling 03 5409 2059.

As the first point of contact, receptionists must review the triage support guide to ensure they are correctly addressing patient's needs and concerns.

Receptionists will often need to ask questions to determine that the patient receives the most appropriate care, at the most appropriate time. At times you may also be referred to speak to one of our practice nurses to determine the urgency or best course of action for your issue or concern.

All telephone calls are answered by a member of the practice who must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Staff follow the practice booking system for all patient appointments
- Before any calls are placed on hold staff must first ask if the caller is okay to be placed on hold and wait for a response
- Staff follow the practice triage system for patients requesting urgent appointments
- Staff make sure that the patient is correctly identified by using one of the three approved patient identifiers

- Family name and given names
 - Date of birth
 - Gender (as identified by the patient)
 - Address
 - Patient health record number, where it exists
 - Individual Healthcare Identifier
 - **A Medicare number is not an approved identifier.*
- Staff members are aware of each doctor's policy on accepting or returning calls.

Phone calls from patients requesting to speak to the doctor will not generally be put through at the time of the call. This is to minimise disruption to the doctor as they are usually in consultation with another patient and respectfully not wanting to interrupt their consultation. Doctors may take phone calls if time permits or if they themselves have requested that the patient contact them back at the clinic.

The reception staff will ask the patient to briefly explain the reason for the call and will determine if the doctor should be interrupted or if a message can be given to the doctor to return the call at a later time. This may be throughout the day or after the doctor has finished consulting for the day. Where clinically significant information is discussed, a note will be made in the patient's file.

Discussing Medical Information: The Practice Manager and reception staff members are not qualified to provide medical advice and are not entitled to discuss any medical information over the phone, email, or any other communication channel.

If you wish to discuss your health concern, you will need to make an appointment with a doctor or nurse.

Fax

Faxes received that are patient related are imported directly into the patient's file. These are then reviewed and actioned by the doctor. Any urgent patient related faxes are immediately handed to the doctor or if that doctor is not available another doctor in the practice will review the fax. All non-patient related faxes are given to the relevant staff member.

Email

Email is not a secure form of communication and we do not use this to communicate personal information to patients without their consent. Whilst we make every effort to keep your information secure it is important for patients to be aware of the risks associated with electronic communication, in that the information could potentially be compromised and accessed by someone other than the intended recipient.

Patients must be aware that any communication they direct to the clinic via email is also NOT secure and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Patients communicating through email do so at their own risk. If you do choose to contact the clinic via email this will be considered as patient consent to reply via email.

Please note: Emails cannot be used to discuss any clinical matters or request appointments.

Our emails are checked on a regular basis, however, they are not constantly monitored. If you have an issue that requires urgent attention, we request that you contact the practice via telephone.

SMS

SMS messages are sent for a variety of health management purposes. These include:

- Appointment reminders – a reminder message will be sent the day prior to your appointment.
- Clinical reminders (e.g. cervical screening reminders/care plans etc).
- Non urgent recall appointments (e.g. follow-up of test results)

We need to ensure that your mobile number is up to date at each visit to ensure that this information is sent to the correct number. Patients must be aware that if another person can access their mobile phone then the confidentiality of these communications cannot be protected by the practice.

Post

Letters may be sent for health reminders and recalls for patients who do not have a mobile number or who have opted out of our electronic messaging system. Incoming mail is collected and opened each day. Letters received that are patient related are directly imported so that the doctor can review and action as required. All remaining letters are provided to the addressee.

Website

The practice's website is updated regularly with updated information. You can see information about Our Doctors who work at the practice and the services they offer, opening hours, history of the practice, information regarding our fees, book appointments online & see our contact information.

Facebook

Our Facebook page provides general health updates and practice information. This page, however, is intended for announcements only by The GP Clinic Bendigo and not for the provision of individual medical advice. The Facebook page updates patients on new doctors commencing or a new service that is available. We also provide updates on any practice closures – i.e. public holiday notices.

General Queries

If you have any queries or questions, we ask that you please contact the practice via telephone.

Communicating with patients with special needs

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

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