



Southland Medical Centre Privacy Policy

Version: 2.0 **Current as of:** January 2025 **Next Review Date:** January 2026

Our Commitment to Your Privacy

Southland Medical Centre is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. This policy outlines how we collect, use, disclose, and secure your personal and health information in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs). Our aim is to provide you with the best possible healthcare while ensuring your information remains confidential and secure.

When you become a patient of our practice, you provide consent for our clinical and administrative team to access and use your information to provide you with quality care.

Why We Collect and Use Your Information

Our main purpose for collecting, using, and holding your personal information is to manage your health effectively. We also use it for directly related activities, such as:

- Providing you with ongoing healthcare and preventative health services.
- Processing financial claims through Medicare, DVA, and private health funds.
- Internal practice audits, accreditation, and quality improvement activities.
- Staff training to ensure our team provides the highest quality of care.
- Contacting you about your health, such as sending appointment reminders or follow-up information.

What Personal Information We Collect

We collect information that is necessary and relevant to provide you with medical care. This may include:

- Your name, date of birth, address, and contact details.
- Your Medicare number, DVA number, or health fund details.
- Your Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI).
- Your medical information, including history, medications, allergies, immunisations, social and family history, and risk factors.

How We Collect Your Information

Our practice collects your personal information in several ways:

- **Directly from you:** When you complete our patient registration form, during a consultation with our GPs or nurses, or via telehealth consultations.
- **From online services:** When you visit our website, send us an email, or make an online appointment.
- **From other healthcare providers:** We may receive information from specialists, allied health professionals, hospitals, pathology, or imaging services that are involved in your care.



- **From a guardian or responsible person:** Where it is not practical to collect it directly from you.
- **From third parties:** Such as My Health Record or government agencies like Medicare, where you have provided consent.

You have the right to deal with us anonymously or under a pseudonym, however, this may not be possible or practical in a medical context.

Who We Share Your Information With

We may share your personal information with the following parties, always taking care to share only what is necessary.

Other Healthcare Providers: We may share information with other providers involved in your care, such as specialists, hospitals, or allied health professionals. This is done via referral, secure messaging, or through your My Health Record (with your consent).

Third Parties for Business Purposes: We engage third parties for services such as IT support, accreditation, and legal or financial advice. These parties are bound by strict confidentiality agreements to protect your information. Your details may also be forwarded to debt collection services should your account be unpaid.

Government and Regulatory Bodies: We may be legally required to share information with bodies like Medicare, the Department of Health, or a court of law (e.g., in response to a subpoena). This includes mandatory reporting of certain communicable diseases.

De-identified Data for Research: We may use your information for quality improvement and population health research. In these cases, all identifying details are removed, ensuring your anonymity. You can opt-out of your de-identified data being used by informing our reception staff.

We will not share your personal information with anyone outside Australia without your explicit consent, unless in exceptional circumstances permitted by law.

Data Breach Notification

We are committed to protecting your information from misuse, loss, or unauthorised access. In the unlikely event of a data breach that is likely to result in serious harm, we will act immediately to contain the breach.

We will notify you and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) as soon as practicable, in accordance with the Notifiable Data Breaches (NDB) scheme.

How We Store and Protect Your Information

Your personal information is stored securely in various forms, including electronic records, paper files, and clinical images. We take robust steps to protect it through:



- **Electronic Security:** Secure servers, password protection, data encryption, and multi-factor authentication.
- **Physical Security:** Secure storage for paper records and restricted access to our premises.
- **Staff Policies:** All staff and contractors sign confidentiality agreements and receive ongoing training on privacy and data security.

We retain your health information for as long as is required by Australian law.

How to Access and Correct Your Information

You have the right to request access to your medical records. Requests must be made in writing. Please direct your request to the Practice Manager. We will respond to your request within 30 days.

A reasonable administrative fee may be charged for providing a copy of your records. We encourage you to keep your personal details up-to-date. You can ask our reception staff to correct or update your information at any time.

How to Lodge a Privacy Complaint

We take all privacy concerns seriously. If you believe your privacy has been breached, please follow these steps:

1. **Contact Us First:** Please express your concerns in writing to our Practice Manager. We will investigate the matter and attempt to resolve it with you directly within 30 days.
 - **Mail:** 50 Chesterville Rd, Cheltenham VIC 3192
 - **Phone:** 03 9584 9504
2. **Contact the OAIC:** If you are not satisfied with our response, you may contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.
 - **Website:** www.oaic.gov.au
 - **Phone:** 1300 363 992

Policy Review

This privacy policy will be reviewed annually, or as new legislation requires, to ensure it remains current and effective.