

Email Policy

Introduction

This policy is to provide information to you, the patient, on how email is used at The Doctors at Lavington and Thurgoona.

The Doctors at Lavington and Thurgoona recognises the practice team requires professional access to email to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients.

1. General Email Usage:

- Email should be used for professional communication purposes only. Personal use of email is discouraged and should be kept to a minimum.
- All email communications must adhere to the practice's standards of professionalism, confidentiality, and integrity.
- Team members must use their designated practice email accounts for all practice-related communications. Personal email accounts should not be used for practice-related communications.
- All emails received by the practice will have an automatic reply email sent to the sender that states:

"Thank you for contacting The Doctors at Lavington and Thurgoona. If you are requiring urgent assistance, please call reception on 02 6057 7100.

Your email will be processed by our Administration Team and forwarded to the appropriate staff member within 48 hours.

For urgent assistance please call 000 or present to your nearest emergency department, we also do not make appointments via email and a consultation is required to seek advice from the doctor.

This is an automatic response email. Please do not reply to this email.

Please contact us on 02 6057 7100 should you require further assistance."

2. Confidentiality and Security:

- Patient-identifiable information (PII) or any confidential medical data must not be sent via email unless necessary for the treatment or care of the patient, and appropriate safeguards (e.g., encryption) are in place.
- Emails containing patient information must include a confidentiality notice stating that the information is intended only for the recipient and that unauthorized use or disclosure is prohibited. See below TDLT email disclaimer:

DISCLAIMER: *'This email and any attachments transmitted with it are confidential and/or privileged. If you are not the intended recipient or person responsible for delivering the email to the intended recipient, you are prohibited from disclosing, copying or using the information contained in it. If you have received this email in error, please inform us by email reply and delete the message and attached documents. We have taken precautions to minimise the risk of transmitting software viruses, but we advise you to carry out your own*

virus checks on any attachments to this email. We cannot accept liability for any loss or damage caused by software viruses. The contents of this email are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of The Doctors at Lavington or Thurgoona.'

- Team members must verify the recipient's email address, including patient's, before sending emails containing patient information to ensure that the information is sent to the correct person.

3. **Email Content:**

- Emails should be concise, clear, and relevant to the subject matter.
- Sensitive or confidential information should be communicated in person or via a secure communication method, rather than through email.
- Attachments should be scanned for viruses and malware before being sent or opened.

4. **Emailing patients:**

If the patient requests something to be sent via email these steps are to be followed:

- Inform the patient that email is not considered a secure format, it is like sending a postcard in the mail; it can be read by several parties.
- Request that the patient emails in a request for communication to be sent via email. This allows us to make sure that we are sending to the correct email address. Our email is: admin@thedoctors.net.au
- Reply to the email with:
"We have received your request for information to be sent via email. As per our telephone discussion, email is not considered a secure format for the transfer of medical information. It is like sending a postcard in the mail, as it can potentially be read by several different parties. If you still wish to proceed with the requested information being sent via this method, please confirm by replying to this email."
- When the reply is received it is to be saved as a PDF document and imported to the patient's file.

5. **Email Retention and Storage:**

- Emails related to patient care or other important practice matters must be retained in accordance with the practice's records management policy.
- Emails should be stored in secure, access-controlled systems to prevent unauthorized access.

6. **Use of External Email Services:**

- The use of external email services (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo) for practice-related communications is prohibited.
- All practice-related communications must be conducted using the practice's designated email system, which includes appropriate security measures.

7. Training and Awareness:

- All team members are required to undergo training on the practice's email usage policies and procedures.
- Regular refresher training sessions will be conducted to ensure ongoing awareness and compliance with this policy.

Policy review statement

This policy is current as at 25/02/2025.

The email policy is regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with current obligations.

If any changes are made:

- They will be reflected on the website.
- Significant changes may be communicated directly to patients via email or other means.

Please check the policy periodically for updates. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us.