

Practice Communication Policy

Current as of: 1st July 2023

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

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

Face to face – this can be via consultation with your doctor or nurse or interactions with other staff members i.e. Practice Manager or reception staff.

Telephone – Patients are able to contact the practice via telephone between the hours of 8am – 5.30pm Monday – Friday

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.

Phone calls from patients requesting to speak to the doctor will not 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.

Reception staff will ask the patient to briefly explain the reason for the call and take a message for the GP. Messages are read by the GPs throughout the day but it may take up to 3 business days to respond to a message. If the message is in relation to script requests or renewal of a referral, the patient will be advised to make an appointment. Where clinically significant information is discussed, a note will be made in the patient's file.

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.

All outgoing faxes are recorded.

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 surgery 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 surgery via email this will be considered as patient consent to reply via email. We endeavour to reply to all emails within 1 business day. 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 may include:

- **Appointment reminders** – a reminder message will be sent the day prior to your appointment.
- **Health reminders** (e.g. cervical screening/care plans etc).
- **Health recalls** (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 offering services available to eligible patients and 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 in the patient's medical record. These are then reviewed and actioned by the doctor. All remaining letters are provided to the addressee.



Website – The practice’s website is updated regularly with new information. You can also locate our opening hours, history of the practice, frequently asked questions, information regarding our fees and services, book appointments online, view our doctors profiles and see our contact information.

Facebook – Our [Facebook page](#) provides general health updates and practice information. This page however, is intended for announcements only by Peppertree GP and not for the provision of individual medical advice. If you have any queries or questions, we ask that you please contact the practice via telephone.