

## Total Wellbeing Medical & Counselling Suites Patient Electronic Communication & Telephone Policy

Effective Date: 30 Oct 2025

Review Date: 30 Oct 2026

Total Wellbeing Medical & Counselling Suites is committed to providing safe, timely and confidential communication with our patients. This policy explains how patients can contact our practice by telephone, SMS and email, and what they can expect in response.

All electronic communication is managed in accordance with Australian privacy legislation and the RACGP Standards for General Practices.

### 1. Privacy & Confidentiality

All patient communications are strictly confidential.

We will only discuss personal health information with the patient themselves unless written consent has been provided.

All telephone calls, messages, SMS and emails relating to patient care are documented in the patient's medical record.

Our staff receive regular training in privacy, confidentiality and secure communication.

Calls involving personal health information are taken in private areas to prevent being overheard.

### 2. Telephone Communication

Telephone communication is an important part of how we support our patients.

#### **How Calls Are Managed:**

Calls are answered promptly during business hours.

Reception staff will:

- Identify the caller using three forms of patient identification
- Ask about the nature and urgency of the call
- Advise how and when the call will be returned if a message is taken

#### **Urgent & Emergency Matters**

Medical emergencies: Patients should call 000 immediately.

## **Results, Prescriptions & Clinical Advice**

Test results and clinical information cannot be given by reception staff.

Messages regarding results, prescriptions or clinical queries are securely sent to the treating doctor. Appointments are required with the doctor to discuss and results, scripts or clinical advice. Doctors may return calls between consultations, during breaks or at the end of the day at their discretion. Non-urgent calls will not interrupt active consultations.

## **Telephone Safety**

Our staff:

- Will never diagnose or recommend treatment over the phone
- Will ask patients to repeat instructions to confirm understanding
- Obtain consent before placing callers on hold

## **3. SMS Communication**

With patient consent, we use SMS for practice communication.

What SMS Is Used For

- Appointment reminders
- Recall and reminder notifications
- Practice updates

## **Important SMS Information**

SMS does not contain sensitive medical information

Responses to recall SMS are tracked to ensure appropriate follow-up

## **4. Email Communication**

Email may be used for limited, non-urgent administrative communication only.

Appropriate Use of Email

- Appointment confirmations
- Referral or form requests (non-urgent)
- General administrative enquiries

## **Email Limitations**

Urgent or complex medical matters must never be sent by email, detailed medical advice is not provided by email, email responses may take up to 2 business days and email is not monitored outside business hours

If your matter is urgent, please call the practice directly.

## **5. Response Time Expectations**

Urgent phone calls: Same day

Non-urgent phone messages: Same or next business day

SMS responses: 1–2 business days

Email enquiries: Within 2 business days

## **6. Appropriate Patient Use of Electronic Communication**

Do not use SMS or email for:

- Chest pain, shortness of breath, severe pain or emergencies
- Mental health crises
- Test result discussions requiring explanation
- Requesting an appointment (please call the practice instead)

## **7. Practice Rights & Responsibilities**

The practice reserves the right to redirect communications to an appointment where clinical assessment is required.

Abusive, threatening or inappropriate communications will not be tolerated.

The practice may suspend electronic communication access if it is misused.

## **8. Consent for Electronic Communication**

By providing your mobile number and/or email address, you consent to receive approved electronic communications from Total Wellbeing Medical & Counselling Suites in accordance with this policy. You may withdraw consent at any time by notifying reception.

## **9. Policy Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with:

- Privacy legislation
- RACGP Standards
- Best-practice clinical governance