

# EMAIL POLICY

**Effective Date:** 08/09/2023

**Reviewed on:** 08/09/2024

**Next Review Date:** 08/09/2025

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Email Policy is to provide clear guidelines for the appropriate use of email communication within and on behalf of Somerville Village Clinic. This policy is designed to ensure that email is used effectively, professionally, and in a way that protects patient privacy, clinic reputation, and complies with relevant laws and regulations.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and any individuals who use the clinic's email system, including both internal and external communications.

## 3. General Guidelines

- **Professionalism:** Email communications should be clear, concise, and professional. Staff must maintain a high standard of professionalism, even in informal internal emails.
- **Respect and Courtesy:** Email should be used to communicate in a respectful and courteous manner. All emails must be free from offensive language, discriminatory remarks, or anything that could damage the reputation of Somerville Village Clinic.
- **Tone and Language:** The tone of emails should be respectful, neutral, and appropriate for the recipient. Avoid using excessive jargon or technical terms that could confuse the recipient. Always check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation before sending emails.
- **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Patient information is confidential and must never be shared via email unless the email system is secure, and the recipient has the necessary consent to receive such information. Never include sensitive patient data (e.g., health records) in non-secure emails.
- **Compliance with Privacy Laws:** All email communication must comply with the **Privacy Act 1988** and the **Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)**, ensuring that patient information is protected and shared only with authorised individuals.

## 4. Email Content and Usage

- **Patient Communication:** Emails containing patient-related information should only be sent to the intended recipient and should be encrypted or password-

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protected to maintain confidentiality. If the email relates to a medical issue, confirm that the recipient is authorised to receive such information before sending it.

- **Work-related Emails:** All email correspondence related to clinic business (e.g., appointments, patient care, clinic operations) should be conducted through the official clinic email addresses. Do not use personal email addresses for work-related matters.
- **Personal Use:** Personal use of clinic email accounts should be kept to a minimum and must not interfere with the clinic's operations. Personal emails should never be used to send confidential or sensitive information.
- **Attachments:** When sending attachments (e.g., medical forms, patient records), ensure they are in an appropriate format, virus-free, and secure. Do not send attachments containing confidential or sensitive information unless the email system is properly encrypted.

## 5. Email Security

- **Email Encryption:** All emails containing sensitive information or patient data must be sent using an encrypted email service. If encryption is not available, use password-protected attachments for sensitive files.
- **Security Best Practices:** Always verify the recipient's email address before sending sensitive information. Be cautious when opening unsolicited attachments or clicking on links in emails to avoid phishing scams or malware.
- **Unauthorized Access:** If you suspect that your email account has been compromised or accessed without your permission, report the incident to the clinic's IT support immediately.
- **Email Signatures:** All employees must include a standard email signature that includes:
  - Name
  - Position
  - Clinic Name and Contact Details
  - A confidentiality notice (e.g., "This email is intended only for the recipient. If you are not the intended recipient, please delete this email and notify the sender.")

## 6. Email Communication with Patients

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- Somerville Village Clinic email is only available for organisations (e.g. Healthcare providers, Medical supplies)
- Somerville Village Clinic has NOREPLY email for sending patients information with secure link.

## 7. Prohibited Email Practices

- **Sending Offensive or Inappropriate Content:** The use of email to send offensive, defamatory, or inappropriate content (including images, jokes, or comments) is prohibited.
- **Sharing Patient Data Without Consent:** Do not send any patient data, test results, or medical records via email unless proper consent and encryption are in place.
- **Spam or Unsolicited Emails:** Do not use clinic email addresses to send unsolicited or spam emails. Only send emails to recipients who have consented to receive information.
- **Personal Email Usage:** Personal email should not be used for business-related matters, especially if they involve patient information, financial transactions, or sensitive data.

## 8. Email Retention and Disposal

- **Retention of Emails:** Emails related to patient care, clinic operations, and legal matters should be stored in accordance with the clinic's record-keeping policy. Do not delete emails that contain essential information unless directed to do so by management.
- **Archiving:** Clinic emails should be archived for the required time period as per the clinic's data retention policy and in compliance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements.
- **Email Deletion:** Do not delete emails that may be required for future reference, audits, or legal purposes unless they fall outside of retention periods.

## 9. Monitoring and Enforcement

- **Monitoring:** The clinic reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and for operational or legal reasons. Employees should not have an expectation of privacy when using clinic-provided email accounts.
- **Violation of Policy:** Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including a formal warning, suspension, or termination of employment, depending on the severity of the infraction.

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## 10. Policy Review

This Email Policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, and operational standards. Staff will be informed of any changes or updates to the policy.