

Privacy Policy

The purpose of this document is to outline how Westgate Medical Centre Sayers Road complies with its confidentiality and privacy obligations.

Westgate Medical Centre will make this Privacy Policy available to anyone who asks for it.

Patients at Westgate Medical Centre have the right to access their personal health information (medical records) under privacy legislation:

Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000 and State Health Records Act 2001

Patients will be assured that:

- Their privacy will be protected when visiting Westgate Medical Centre
- Their information collected and retained in our records are correct and up to date
- That they can access their information for review

Health Information

Westgate Medical Centre recognises that the information we collect is often of a highly sensitive nature and as an organisation we have adopted the highest privacy compliance standards relevant to ensure personal information is protected.

For administrative and billing purposes, and to enable the patient to be attended by other practitioners in our practice, patient information is shared between the practitioners and other health professionals at the practice. Westgate Medical Centre may collect personal information regarding patients (health information) for the purpose of providing medical services and treatment.

Personal information will generally include:

- Patients' name, address, telephone number and Medicare number
- Current medications and treatments used by the patient
- Previous/current medical history, including where clinically relevant and family medical history
- Name of health service provider/s or specialist to whom the patient is referred, copies of any letters of referrals and copies of any reports back

Westgate Medical Centre may access information:

- Provided directly by the patient
- Provided on patient's behalf with the consent of the patient
- From a health service provider who refers the patient to medical practitioners providing service at or from Westgate Medical Centre, or from health service providers to whom patients are referred

Use or Disclosure of Personal Information

Personal information collected by Westgate Medical Centre may be used or disclosed:

- As required for delivery of the health service to the patient
- As required for the ordinary operation of our services (i.e. to refer the patient to a medical specialist or other health service provider)
- As required under compulsion of law
- Where there is a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health or safety, or
- A serious threat to public health or public safety

Westgate Medical Centre may use or disclose personal information for quality assurance, training, billing, liaising with government office regarding Medicare entitlements and payments and as may be required by the Practice Insurers.

Accuracy of Your Information

Westgate Medical Centre is committed to ensuring your information is accurate and has processes in place to ensure that the accuracy of this information is maintained. If you believe that the personal information is incorrect, please inform the practice staff when next attending.

Security of Information Collected

Other than as described in this Policy or permitted under the National Privacy Act, Westgate Medical Centre uses its reasonable endeavours to ensure that identifying health information is not disclosed to any person.

Due to the sensitive nature of the information collected by the practice to provide its services, extra precautions are taken to ensure the security of that information. Information may be stored electronically and/or in hard copy form. All electronically stored files are password-protected on several levels and regular backups of data are performed.

Westgate Medical Centre requires its employees to observe obligations of confidentiality in the course of their employment, with all staff/contractors signing Confidentiality Agreements.

How Long Are Medical Records Kept?

Westgate Medical Centre keeps health information for a minimum of 7 years from the date of last entry in the patient record, unless the patient is/was a child, in which case the record must be kept until the patient attains or would have attained 25 years of age.

Accessing Your Information

On request, you may have access to your medical records held by Westgate Medical Centre, except in circumstances where access may be denied under *The Privacy Act* or other laws. For example, access can be denied when letting a patient see their records would pose a serious threat to the patient's life or health, or the life or health of someone else (such as a relative, the health service provider, staff or other patients).

The threat must be significant – for example, where there is a serious risk the patient may cause self-harm or harm to another person if they saw the information. The threat can be a risk of danger to physical or mental health, but does not need to be imminent – it can be a serious threat that might occur sometime after access is granted.

We respect an individual's privacy and allow access to information via personal viewing either in the Practice Manager's office or in a quiet area next to reception and away from the waiting area. The patient may take notes or ask for printed copies of requested information. A GP may explain the contents of the record to the patient if requested or required.

Can I Transfer My Medical Records to a New Medical Practitioner?

Patients have the right to attend a Medical Practitioner of their choice and are free to leave Westgate Medical Centre and attend another if they wish.

How Do I Arrange This?

When a patient requests that their health records be transferred to a medical practitioner outside Westgate Medical Centre, the Medical Practitioner has an obligation to provide a copy or summary of the patient health record in a timely manner to facilitate care of the patient.

For medico-legal reasons, Westgate Medical Centre retains the original record and provides the new medical practitioner with a summary or a copy. If a summary of the patient's health record is provided to the new medical practitioner, a copy of the summary as well as the request for medical information should be kept on file for record purposes.

A patient can also have a copy of his/her medical records transferred to our practice by asking the new medical practitioner to arrange for the transfer of records from the previous treating medical practitioner. Patients can also complete the *Transfer of Medical Records* request form found at Reception. The patient will also still have to attend the previous clinic and complete a *History Release Form*.

Can the Doctor Charge for the Handing Over of Medical Records?

Some medical practitioners may charge a fee for handling and copying their records to cover the administrative costs involved in the process. The previous medical practitioner may charge a fee for providing a summary, especially if a patient's medical history is long and/or complex.

Changes to The Privacy Policy

Westgate Medical Centre has the right to change the Privacy Policy at any time. If there are updates to the Privacy Policy, we will address the changes promptly and update the revision date of this document.

Obtaining Further Information

If patients require more information regarding Westgate Medical Centre, its services and facilities they can:

- Ask a staff member
- Take a copy of our Practice Information Sheet, located at the Reception Desk.

Accessing Your Information, Complains and Obtaining Further Information

If an individual wants to:

- Complain to us about a breach of privacy
- Access his or her own information held by us
- Correct any information held by us concerning his or her own information, or
- Find out more about how we deal with personal information, they can address their concerns/request/complaints to:

The Privacy Officer – c/o The Practice Manager
Westgate Medical Centre
259 Heaths Road
Werribee VIC 3030

****** Disclaimer ******

Whilst we make every effort to protect your privacy, we may need to disclose personal information when required by law where we have a good-faith belief that such action is necessary to comply with a current judicial proceeding, a court order or legal process served on our company or site.