

EMERGENCY AND URGENT CARE MESSAGING

Our practice strives to give patients prompt advice or information about their care over the phone. We quickly assess the urgency of each patient's need. When speaking by phone, we aim to communicate clearly and simply and confirm the patient has understood what was said.

We also offer electronic communication (email and SMS) as an alternative method of contact. Patients may choose to contact us — or be contacted by us — in these ways. We inform patients about the risks of using electronic communication, including possible compromises to privacy and confidentiality. Patients must consent to this via a signed form.

Our practice complies with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), the Privacy Act 1988, and the Health Records Act 2012 (WA). Because under certain circumstances we may be held responsible for the content of emails, every practice email includes a disclaimer. All emails and SMS messages between patients and our practice — and any responses or actions taken — are recorded in the patient's medical record.

Fax remains the practice's primary communication tool. We aim to respond promptly to all patient messages or communications that require follow-up by a doctor or staff member. All messages — from patients, to patients, or about patients — become part of the patient's health record, along with any related actions.

To ensure good communication, we offer language assistance for patients who do not speak or read English, are more comfortable in another language, or have special communication needs. Such patients may choose to use a language service when interacting with GPs or clinical staff.

We also support digital technology that gives patients 24-hour access to our appointment system. Patients can book appointments online via our website booking page or directly through HotDoc.

Process: Telephone Communication

- All calls are answered by a staff member following these guidelines.
- Staff adhere to the practice's appointment-booking system.
- Before placing a call on hold, staff must check if the matter is an emergency.
- Staff use a triage system for urgent appointment requests.
- Patients must be correctly identified using three of the following approved identifiers:
 - Family name and given names
 - Date of birth
 - Gender (as identified by the patient)
 - Address
 - Patient health record number (if available)
 - Individual Healthcare Identifier*(Medicare numbers are not acceptable as identifiers.)*
- Staff are mindful of confidentiality and must not speak patient names aloud where others might overhear.

- Staff are aware of each doctor's protocol on accepting or returning calls.
- In non-urgent cases, calls need not interrupt ongoing consultations; a message is passed on promptly.

Process: Electronic Communication

- Our practice email for patient and stakeholder contact is **info@marviecare.com.au**.
- Email is reserved for appropriate non-clinical issues — we do *not* provide consultations or medical advice via email, except in rare cases.
- The reception email is checked throughout the business day, and messages are forwarded to the correct team member for reply within 24 hours.
- We use SMS to remind patients of upcoming appointments — these messages do not include medical or identifying details. Patients are responsible for following up as needed.
- Any electronic communication with a patient is entered into the patient's medical record by the staff member handling the inquiry.

Internal Handling of Communications

- Any message that requires action is flagged to a staff member or, in their absence, delegated to a designated backup.
- Communications are recorded via the appointment system of best practice, and messages for doctors are placed in their pigeonhole.
- Significant phone calls or electronic exchanges — including after-hours contacts, emergencies, or urgent queries — are documented in the patient's chart or appointment screen.
- The log should include:
 - Patient or caller name and contact number
 - Date and time of contact
 - Whether it was urgent
 - Key details about the patient's condition
 - Advice or information from the doctor
 - Follow-up appointment information
- All documented communications are delivered to the relevant staff member on the same day and must be acted upon promptly (within 24 hours).

Communicating with Patients with Special Needs

- We keep an updated contact list of translation and interpreter services, and services for patients with disabilities, accessible to reception staff.
- These services include:
 - National Relay Service (NRS)
 - Auslan services
 - Translation and Interpreter Service (TIS)
 - Doctors Priority Line (1300 131 450)

For Emergences:

- Call triple zero (000), this is the number for police, fire, or ambulance.
- Go to Emergency Department

For non-life-threatening urgent advice after hours:

- Call Healthdirect 1800022222 This service is available for urgent, but not life-threatening, situations.

For mental health emergencies:

- Call the [Mental Health Emergency Response Line \(MHERL\)](#)
- **Call Lifeline:** You can call, text, or chat online for 24-hour crisis support.
- Go to Emergency Department