



Privacy policy

Purpose

This Privacy Policy explains how Bowen Doctors collects, uses, stores, protects and discloses your personal information, including your health information.

We are committed to protecting your privacy and handling your personal information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) and other applicable Commonwealth and Queensland legislation.

This policy applies to all patients and individuals who access our services.

Why your consent is important

When you register as a patient of our practice, you provide consent for our doctors and practice staff to collect, use and disclose your personal information for the primary purpose of providing healthcare.

Your personal information is only accessed by members of Bowen Doctors team who require it to perform their duties.

Where your information is required for a purpose not directly related to your healthcare or where consent is required by law, we will seek your additional consent unless an exception applies under the Privacy Act.

What is personal information?

Personal information is information or an opinion that identifies you, or could reasonably identify you.

Examples include:

- name
- date of birth
- address
- telephone number
- email address
- occupation
- Medicare details

What is sensitive information?

Sensitive information includes information relating to your health and medical care.

This may include:

- medical history
- family medical history where clinically relevant
- medications
- allergies
- pathology and imaging results
- genetic information
- cultural background or ethnicity where relevant to your care
- emergency contact details
- information regarding disabilities or healthcare needs

Throughout this policy, "personal information" includes sensitive information unless otherwise stated.

What personal information do we collect?

We may collect:

- your name, address and contact details
- date of birth
- Medicare number
- Department of Veterans' Affairs details
- Health Care Card or Pension Card details
- private health insurance information
- emergency contact details
- occupation
- next of kin
- medical history
- family history where clinically relevant
- medications
- allergies
- immunisation history
- referrals
- specialist reports
- pathology and imaging reports
- clinical notes
- correspondence relating to your healthcare
- billing and payment information

We may also collect information that does not identify you personally, such as anonymous survey responses used to improve our services.

How do we collect your information?

We usually collect information directly from you.

Information may be collected when you:

- complete a registration form

- attend a consultation
- participate in a telehealth consultation
- book appointments online
- contact us by telephone
- email Bowen Doctors
- communicate through secure electronic messaging
- use our website or online patient services

Where appropriate, we may also collect information from:

- your parent, guardian or authorised representative
- specialists
- hospitals
- pathology providers
- diagnostic imaging providers
- allied health professionals
- community health services
- Medicare
- the Department of Veterans' Affairs
- your private health insurer
- My Health Record, where authorised

Website information

When you visit our website, we may collect limited information through cookies and website analytics to improve the performance and security of our website.

This information does not usually identify you personally unless you choose to provide personal information through an online form or appointment booking system.

Can you remain anonymous?

Where lawful and practical, you may choose to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym.

However, in many circumstances this will not be practical because accurate identification is necessary to provide safe healthcare.

What happens if we cannot collect your information?

If you choose not to provide information required for your healthcare:

- we may be unable to provide medical services
- diagnosis or treatment may be incomplete or inaccurate
- your health outcomes may be affected
- we may be unable to comply with our legal obligations.

Why do we collect, use and disclose your information?

Our primary purpose is to provide safe, high-quality healthcare.

We also collect, use and disclose information to:

- provide medical treatment

- communicate with other healthcare providers involved in your care
- arrange referrals
- receive specialist reports
- maintain accurate health records
- manage recalls and reminders
- undertake quality improvement activities
- meet accreditation requirements
- process Medicare and health fund claims
- manage billing
- respond to complaints
- comply with legal obligations
- notify insurers or medical defence organisations where appropriate
- conduct practice administration
- educate and supervise healthcare professionals where appropriate and lawful.

Recalls and reminders

Our practice operates recall and reminder systems to support your ongoing healthcare.

These may include reminders regarding:

- preventative health
- follow-up appointments
- chronic disease management
- immunisations
- screening programs
- test results requiring follow-up.

You may advise us if you do not wish to receive reminder communications.

Research and quality improvement

From time to time, de-identified information may be used for quality improvement activities, clinical audit or approved research.

Where identifiable information is required, your consent will be obtained unless otherwise authorised by law.

Direct marketing

We may occasionally provide information about services offered by our practice that may be relevant to your healthcare.

We will not send marketing communications unrelated to your healthcare without your consent.

You may opt out of receiving these communications at any time by notifying our reception staff.

How do we store and protect your information?

Our practice maintains electronic medical records.

We take reasonable steps to protect personal information from misuse, interference, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

Security measures include:

- individual user accounts
- role-based access
- strong password policies
- multi-factor authentication where available
- encrypted data transmission
- antivirus protection
- firewalls
- audit logs
- secure backups
- business continuity planning
- secure disposal of electronic media
- regular software updates
- staff confidentiality agreements
- ongoing staff privacy and cybersecurity training.

Where cloud-based systems are used, we take reasonable steps to ensure service providers meet Australian privacy and security requirements.

Who do we share your information with?

Your information may be shared with:

- healthcare providers involved in your care
- pathology providers
- diagnostic imaging providers
- hospitals
- pharmacies where appropriate
- Medicare
- the Department of Veterans' Affairs
- approved software providers
- secure messaging providers
- cloud hosting providers
- information technology support providers
- accreditation agencies
- legal representatives where required
- insurers or medical defence organisations where appropriate.

We only disclose the minimum information necessary.

My Health Record

Where appropriate and authorised, our practice may upload or access information through My Health Record, including Shared Health Summaries and Event Summaries.

The use of My Health Record is governed by Commonwealth legislation.

Patients may choose to manage access controls within their My Health Record.

Overseas disclosure

Our practice generally does not disclose personal information to overseas recipients.

If overseas disclosure becomes necessary, we will only do so where permitted by law or with your consent.

Data breaches

Despite our security measures, no information system is completely secure.

If an eligible data breach occurs that is likely to result in serious harm, we will comply with the Notifiable Data Breaches Scheme, including notifying affected individuals and the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner where required.

Accessing your health information

You may request access to your personal information by writing to Bowen Doctors Manager.

We will respond within 30 days or within any timeframe required by law.

A reasonable administrative fee may apply for providing copies of records where permitted by law.

In some circumstances, access may be refused where permitted under the Privacy Act. If access is refused, we will provide written reasons where required.

Correcting your information

We take reasonable steps to ensure your information is accurate, complete and up to date.

Please advise us promptly if your personal details change.

You may request correction of your information at any time by contacting Bowen Doctors Manager.

Retention of health records

Health records are retained in accordance with applicable legal and professional record retention requirements.

When records are no longer required to be retained, they are securely destroyed or permanently de-identified.

Privacy complaints

If you have concerns about how we have handled your personal information, please contact Bowen Doctors Manager in writing.

We will investigate your complaint confidentially and aim to respond within 30 days.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you may contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Website: www.oaic.gov.au

Telephone: 1300 363 992

Contact us

The Privacy Officer

Bowen Doctors

37 George Street, Bowen Qld 4805

PH: (07) 4785 1533

Email: reception@bowendoctors.com.au

Review of this policy

This Privacy Policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required to reflect changes in legislation, professional standards and practice procedures.

The current version is available from reception and on our website.