



North Medical – Patient Communication Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines how North Medical communicates with patients to ensure clear, timely, respectful, and confidential interactions across all channels. It also establishes expected response timeframes for patient enquiries.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all North Medical staff, including general practitioners, nurses, administrative staff, and contractors involved in patient communication.

3. Principles

North Medical is committed to:

- Providing timely and professional communication
- Maintaining patient confidentiality and privacy at all times
- Using clear, respectful, and accessible language
- Ensuring patients understand how and when they will receive responses
- Documenting relevant communications in the patient record where appropriate

4. Communication Channels

4.1 Telephone Communication

Purpose: Appointment bookings, general enquiries, follow-ups, and urgent matters.

Standards:

- Calls are answered promptly during business hours
- Staff will identify themselves and the practice when answering calls
- Messages will be taken clearly and passed to the appropriate clinician or staff member

Response Timeframe:

- Messages requiring a response will be returned within 24 hours (business days)
- Urgent clinical matters will be escalated immediately to a clinician

4.2 Email Communication

Purpose: Non-urgent enquiries, administrative requests, document submission.



Standards:

- Email is not to be used for urgent or emergency medical issues
- Automatic reply will inform patients of response timeframes and emergency instructions
- Sensitive information will only be shared in accordance with privacy regulations

Response Timeframe:

- Emails will be responded to within 48 hours (business days)

4.3 SMS (Text Messaging)

Purpose: Appointment reminders, recalls, brief notifications.

Standards:

- SMS is used for outbound communication only unless otherwise specified
- No clinical advice or sensitive information is provided via SMS
- Patients must consent to receiving SMS communication

Response Timeframe:

- SMS replies are not monitored for clinical communication
- If patients reply, they will be directed to call the practice

4.4 Face-to-Face Communication

Purpose: In-person consultations, reception interactions, and care coordination.

Standards:

- Staff will communicate clearly, respectfully, and maintain professionalism
- Patients will be given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification
- Interpreters will be arranged where required

Response Timeframe:

- Immediate, during the patient's visit

5. Urgent and Emergency Communication

- Patients experiencing a medical emergency will be instructed to call 000
- Urgent clinical concerns communicated via phone will be prioritised and escalated immediately



- Email and SMS must not be used for urgent medical issues

6. Confidentiality and Privacy

- All communication must comply with the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) and relevant health records legislation
- Patient information will only be shared with authorised individuals
- Emails and electronic communication will be handled securely

7. Documentation

- Clinically relevant communications (phone, email, or in person) will be recorded in the patient's medical record where appropriate
- Any advice given outside of a consultation must be documented

8. Policy monitoring

Review Frequency	<i>Yearly</i>
Policy History	<i>V1</i>
Date of next review	<i>04/2027</i>
Responsibility	<i>Practice Manager/Privacy Officer/Directors</i>