

Goodinge Group Practice - Confidentiality Policy

Your information

When you visit the surgery we want you to feel able to discuss anything with your doctor that might relate to your health. This may include sexual matters, your relationships, drugs, drinking, your mental health, your job etc. You need to feel that anything you inform us of will remain absolutely confidential. The General Medical Council, whose rules on confidentiality apply to all doctors in the UK, enforces our duty of confidentiality to all patients. The practice is also registered under the Data Protection Act 1998.

We take great care to ensure that no information you give us is passed on either inadvertently or through the deception of others. This would include other family members unless we have your written consent.

Releasing information without your agreement - There are a few situations when your doctor is allowed to release information without your consent. These situations are very rare and are clearly defined by law.

Reports for other people - Sometimes you may need a report prepared by your doctor for someone else who is not involved in your care. This may be your employer, an insurance company or your solicitor. We will never release any information to any other party without your written consent. You have the right to see these reports before they are sent off. If you have any worries we recommend you ask to check them at the time.

Access to medical records - You have the right to see your own medical record, both hand written and entered onto the computer. You should apply in writing to the practice manager who will arrange an appointment. Please note there may be a charge for accessing your record and any subsequent copying of the contents that you may request.

Practice Staff - Doctors do not discuss their patients with reception staff, but staff may type letters, file incoming hospital post and results and carry out a host of other administrative tasks on behalf of your doctor. They are not allowed to access your notes for any other purpose. All our staff are highly trustworthy and professional in their attitude to the responsibility that patient confidentiality places on them. They must not reveal to anyone outside the practice personal information that they learn in the course of their work, or due to their presence in the surgery, without the patient's consent. Nor will they discuss with colleagues any aspect of a patient's attendance at the surgery in a way that might allow identification of a patient, unless to do so is necessary for that patient's care.

If disclosure is necessary

If a patient or another person is at grave risk of serious harm which disclosure to an appropriate person would prevent, the relevant health professional will counsel the patient about the benefits of disclosure. If the patient refuses to allow disclosure, the health professional can take advice from colleagues within the practice, or from a professional, regulatory or defence body, in order to decide whether a disclosure without consent is justified to protect the patient or another person. If a decision is taken to disclose, the patient should always be informed before the disclosure is made, unless to do so could be dangerous. If at all possible, any such decisions should be shared with another member of the practice team.

Any decision to disclose information to protect the health, safety or well-being will be based on the degree of current or potential harm, not on the age of the patient.

Information to the Health Authority and other health organisations

Some information is sent electronically to the Health Authority, mainly statistical information for the calculation of payments to the doctors for their work. Some personal details such as changes of address etc., are sent but no clinical information that is transmitted. Health Authority staff are bound by the same rules on data protection and confidentiality.

The practice is also requested by the NHS and MRC to provide data for the clinical audit or research of certain diseases and conditions. Prescribing information is also requested to help compile statistics on how diseases are treated and the costs involved in treating some illnesses. All such information is anonymous; individual patients will not be recognizable from this information.

Computer Security

All persons who can access your record on computer are given a unique password. Different grades of staff have different levels of access. Staff should only have access to those parts of the computer record that they need to do their job. An audit trail of who has used the computer is kept within the computer system with every login recorded and identified by the user's password. All computers have anti-virus software loaded, which is regularly updated to protect your medical record.