

Privacy Brochure (Long Version)

Protecting Your Privacy

Eastern Health is dedicated to respecting and protecting everyone's privacy.

We are required by law to ensure that all personal and health information relating to patients and staff remains confidential and protected from unauthorised use or access.

Eastern Health is required to comply with relevant legislation relating to privacy and confidentiality including:

- Health Services Act 1988 (Vic)
- Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 (Vic)
- Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

In addition, Eastern Health employees are bound by strict privacy and confidentiality policies which detail how we can collect, store, use and disclose patient information.

What information is collected

Eastern Health will only collect information from you (the patient) as required for the purpose of providing you with necessary health care and treatment, and for related health services functions. Information that Eastern Health will collect includes demographic details as listed below, the contact details of your General Practitioner (GP), and details about your current and past health history which may include information from other external health care providers if this information is required to support clinical care.

Some examples of information that Eastern Health may collect about you include:

Patient Name	Country of Birth	General Practitioner (GP)
Date of Birth	Preferred Language	Medicare Card Number
Address	Occupation	Private Health Insurance Number
Gender	Religion	Health Care Card Number
Marital Status	Next of Kin Details	Pension Card Number

If the details of your General Practitioner (GP) or referring doctor change, please inform Eastern Health staff at your next visit to ensure that these details are updated in our systems. This will ensure that we can maintain communication with your GP to ensure they are kept informed regarding your ongoing healthcare needs.

Generally, Eastern Health will collect information directly from you (the patient) rather than from another person. If this is not possible, and where practicable, you will be advised.

How is my information shared and used?

Your information may be used or disclosed by Eastern Health for various purposes including, to provide you with essential health care and treatment, to make decisions about your care in partnership with you, to offer you health education, to send you a Health Experience Survey for completion to provide us with feedback regarding your visit at Eastern Health, and to ask you for a donation to support our Eastern Health Foundation.

Health professionals involved in your care and treatment also have the ability to access and utilise your health information to ensure that they can provide you with the best possible care that is suited to your requirements and needs.

Below is a list of some of the health professionals with whom your information may be shared with:

- Hospital Employees, including Doctors, Surgeons, or Nurses
- Specialist Outpatient Clinics/Services
- Allied Health Services
- Home Nursing Services
- Maternity Services
- Mental Health Services
- Imaging Services
- Pathology Services

Examples of how Eastern Health may use or disclose your information:

- **Your ongoing health care and treatment**
 - Sending a discharge summary, pathology results, radiology results, to your treating General Practitioner (GP), Specialist or another hospital should you present their for treatment and care.
 - Providing a general update regarding your condition to family/next of kin, unless you have expressly requested that this does not occur.
- **Accounts and billing**
 - If you receive treatment and care from an Eastern Health by a site or service that is not covered by Medicare or private insurance, your information may be shared with Patient Accounts in order to manage the billing, claim and payments.

- **My Health Record**

- The My Health Record is a secure, patient-controlled online service which is operated by the Australian Government. Eastern Health will upload certain documents to My Health Record such as Discharge Summaries, Pathology and Radiology Results.
- The My Health Record provides an online summary of a patient's health information however it does not replace existing medical records that Eastern Health hold.
- All patients registered with Medicare will have a My Health Record, unless they have actively opted out (undertaken by contacting Medicare).
- For more information on what Eastern Health currently uploads to The My Health Record, please email myhealthrecord@easternhealth.org.au.
- If you have a My Health Record but do not want Eastern Health to upload your information or documents to it, please speak to your treating team as soon as possible.

- **CareSync Exchange**

- CareSync Exchange is a secure system for sharing patient health information among Victorian Public Health Services, implemented by the Victorian Department of Health.
- The system enables clinicians in these services to access and share patient health information at the point of care, helping them make informed decisions.
- Eastern Health and the Department of Health use this system to collect and share information, enabling authorised staff to access patient health data across the Victorian public health system.
- Eastern Health may share your information to CareSync Exchange to provide critical health information to other health services you visit.
- Eastern Health may also access your information via CareSync Exchange, allowing our clinicians to gather essential health information about any care or treatment you've received at other Victorian Public Health Services.
- The information shared may include:
 - Personal details such as your name, date of birth and address.
 - Records of your care episodes, including summaries, test results.
 - Information about your hospital visits as an inpatient, emergency, and outpatient.
 - Clinical documents such as diagnostic test reports, hospital discharge summaries and letters related to each visit.
 - Relevant health information about any treatments you've received.
- This process ensures that you receive safe and effective care while supporting your ongoing clinical needs.
- The CareSync Exchange is follows the Department of Health Privacy Management Framework. More information is available at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/quality-safety-service/caresync-exchange> or visit our CareSync Exchange webpage for further information.

- **Sharing personal information to support family and child wellbeing**
 - Eastern Health is required to share information that is relevant and necessary for family violence risk assessment and management, or to promote child safety and wellbeing.
 - This includes voluntarily sharing information, or responding to requests if it is believed doing so will increase the safety of a victim survivor or improve the wellbeing of a child.
 - Examples of information that may be shared include personal, health and sensitive information (including opinions) that are relevant to assessing and/or managing family violence risk.

- **Health Experience Surveys**
 - To help us improve health services you may be contacted about your experience with Eastern Health.

- **Fundraising**
 - The Eastern Health Foundation assist in funding a variety of healthcare needs for patient's including the purchase of new medical equipment, running wellbeing services/ programs and conducting research.

- **Health-Related Research**
 - To assist in health-related research projects, studies or clinical trials that aim to improve and inform the care of our community, where approved by the Eastern Health Research and Ethics Committee.
 - Eastern Health has strong affiliations with Australia's top universities and educational institutions including University of Melbourne, Monash University, Deakin University, La Trobe University and RMIT University.
 - Eastern Health also supports collaborative research with other groups such as Ambulance Victoria, Medicare Locals and other healthcare providers.
 - In the case of disclosing information for the purpose of research, in most cases, we require the requesting party provide us with your written consent to disclose the requested information to them.

There may be occasions where Eastern Health is required to disclose your information. Some examples may include:

- **Legal Obligations**
 - Your information may need to be disclosed where Eastern Health is served with a subpoena (also called a summons) or a warrant requiring the production of the relevant information.
 - Where a mandatory notification is required, such as child protection notifications.

- **Government Agencies**
 - The Department of Health or other agencies may require Eastern Health to disclose information by law, for example, sharing of information regarding notifiable diseases.

- **Quality and Safety purposes**
 - Eastern Health may share your health and personal information (as authorised by the Health Services Act 1988) for quality and safety purposes.
 - This would be limited to disclosing your information to entities responsible for investigating failures in quality and safety and for health system quality and safety oversight, such as the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Safer Care Victoria, the Victorian Agency for Health Information, and/or another health service entity.
 - Any such sharing would be subject to and comply with existing data security and storage requirements set out in the Health Privacy Principles and Information Privacy Principles.
 - The sharing and using of information is designed to address any quality and safety issues that may have affected you to ensure they inform continuous service improvement.

- **Unique Patient Identifier**
 - The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) collects patient demographic data which is uploaded to a statewide patient database.

- **Third party subcontractors**
 - Your information may be shared with third parties who are involved in the operation of Eastern Health, including subcontractors (for example, a mailing company).

How we will contact you

Eastern Health may contact you by any of the methods of contact you have provided our organisation with, including either by telephone, postal mail, text message or email.

If you have any questions or wish to withdraw your consent to be contacted, please contact privacy@easternhealth.org.au.

Security

For the safety of our patients, visitors and employees, Eastern Health has CCTV installed at various sites and departments. Additionally, security staff may utilise body worn cameras during their shifts.

How can I access my health information?

In the first instance, you may wish to check your My Health Record to check if the information you require has been uploaded by Eastern Health.

If you require information from an admission, visit or attendance to be shared with your General Practitioner (GP), specialist or other treating practitioner for continuity of care, you can reach out to the Release of Information (ROI) team. The team can assist by arranging for a copy to be sent to your relevant practitioner without the need for a formal Freedom of Information request. Please send your request to ROI@easternhealth.org.au, or contact the ROI team on (03) 9871 – 3655. Further information is also available on our website.

Alternatively, if you require a significant amount of health information, such as admission notes, or your complete medical record, you will be required to submit Freedom of Information (FOI) request.

For a FOI request to be valid, the request must:

1. Be in writing;
2. Clearly identify the document(s) you are seeking; and
3. Enclose the application fee, or evidence that payment of the fee would cause the applicant financial hardship.

Requests should be directed to the Eastern Health FOI Service and sent via email or fax. Further information is available on our website, or by contacting the FOI Service on (03) 9871 - 3170 or via email FOI@easternhealth.org.au.

How can I correct my information?

If you believe that the information contained in your health records is incorrect, misleading, incomplete or out of date, you may request, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, for an amendment. In order to do so, you should write a letter or an email to the Freedom of Information team clearly describing how the information is incorrect, misleading, incomplete or out of date, and specify the amendments that you are requesting.

For patients of our mental health services, where a request for amendment has been denied, you may wish to contribute a health information statement to be retained in your medical record. This can be submitted to FOI@easternhealth.org.au. Please note that a Health Information Statement must be submitted within 12 months of the date the amendment request was denied.

For further information, please visit our website or contact us on (03) 9871-3170.

Is my information secure?

Eastern Health is committed to ensuring that the information we collect and hold regarding our patients is accurate, complete and up-to-date.

Access to Eastern Health records and computer systems is controlled, regulated and closely monitored. The computer systems are protected by security passwords, and all employees are bound by a strict code of conduct. Audits are carried out to ensure that there is no unauthorised access to patient records.

Employees and authorised external users are provided with restricted access to allow only access to the systems that they require in order to perform their duties.

How long is my information kept?

It is a legal requirement for Eastern Health to hold medical records for extended periods. However, information will not be kept longer than necessary. Eastern Health follows the General Disposal Schedule for Public Health Services, Patient Information Records. The retention periods are outlined below:

- In most cases, inpatient records are retained for a minimum of 15 years after a patient last attends, or until the age of 25 if the patient was a child while receiving treatment.
- Outpatient and emergency department records are retained for a minimum of 12 years after a patient's last attendance.
- Psychiatric inpatient and outpatient records are retained for a minimum of 25 years, or until the patient reached 43 years of age, whichever is the longest.
- Records of deceased patient are retained for 12 years from the date of death.

Periodic audits of records and databases are conducted to ensure that information held is accurate and up to date.

Complaints regarding your privacy

If you have a complaint regarding the management of your privacy at Eastern Health, please reach out to us by contacting:

- The Patient Relations Advisor at 1800 EASTERN (1800 327 8376) or via email at feedback@easternhealth.org.au.