Communication Policy

Our aim is to facilitate optimal communication opportunities with our patients. All communication (whether face-to-face, via phone, or electronic) with patients must be conducted with appropriate regard to the privacy and confidentiality of the patient's health information.

Privacy and confidentiality training is provided as part of our staff induction program; with regular updates and training provided annually. It is the responsibility of the Practice Manager to ensure that all training and training records are completed, current and stored correctly.

We also encourage and support the use of digital technology to enable our patient with 24-hour access to our appointment system. Our practice allows patients to book their healthcare appointment with their preferred healthcare provider online via the booking page, or direct with HotDoc.

Our practice endeavours to provide patients with access to timely advice or information about their clinical care. This communication can occur through the following channels:

Face to face

This can be via consultation with a doctor or nurse or interactions with other staff members i.e. Practice Manager or reception staff.

Telephone

Patients are able to contact the practice via telephone between the hours of 8:30am – 4.30pm Monday – Friday.

Effective handling of patient phone calls is important. To facilitate this, reception staff are trained to:

- Always ask if the call is an emergency and gain permission from callers before placing them on hold.
- Use three approved forms of identification for identifying patients over the phone e.g. name, DOB, address, phone number.
- Rate the urgency of a call and manage as per the POPGUNS Triage Support Guide found at the reception desk.
- Ask questions to ensure that the patient receives the most appropriate care, at the most appropriate time.
- Consult the practice nurses, at times, to determine the urgency, or best course of action.
- Advise the patient of the process for responding to/returning their call.

All members of our practice team are aware of and have received training in the importance of documenting in the patient’s health record:

- all attempts to contact the patient
- all contacts from the patient
- the reason for the contact, and
- the information given by and to the patient.

Training provided also includes the information and advice practice team members can and cannot give to patients over the phone or electronically.

Phone calls from patients requesting to speak to the doctor will not be put through at the time of the call. This is to minimise disruption to the doctor as they are usually in consultation with another patient and respectfully not wanting to interrupt their consultation.

Reception staff will ask the patient to briefly explain the reason for the call and take a message for the GP. Messages are read by the GPs throughout the day but it may take up to 3 business days to respond to a message. If the message is in relation to script requests or renewal of a referral, the patient will be advised to make an appointment. Where clinically significant information is discussed, a note will be made in the patient's file.

Fax

Faxes received that are patient related are imported directly into the patient's file/doctor's inbox. These are then reviewed and actioned by the doctor. Any urgent patient related faxes are immediately handed to the patient's regular doctor for review or, if that doctor is not available, another doctor within the practice. All non-patient related faxes are given to the relevant staff member.

All outgoing faxes are recorded.

Email

The Practice requires that electronic communication (e.g. via email) is conducted with appropriate regard to the private, confidential and sensitive nature of the health information with which the practice deals. All employees must ensure that they use internet, email and secure messaging in connection with their work in a manner which complies with the practice's privacy obligations, and in a respectful and professional manner.

The practice uses the following confidentiality and privilege notice on outgoing emails that are affiliated with the Practice:

NOTICE: This message (including any attached files) is intended only for the use of the addressee named above and may contain privileged and confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient of this message you must not disseminate, copy or take any action based upon it. If you have received this message in error, please notify GreenHills Health Hub immediately on (02) 9178 9031.

Email is not a secure form of communication and we do not use this to communicate personal information to patients without their consent. Whilst we make every effort to keep your information secure it is important for patients to be aware of the risks associated with electronic communication, in that the information could potentially be compromised and accessed by someone other than the intended recipient. Patients must be aware that any communication they

direct to the surgery via email is also NOT secure and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Patients communicating through email do so at their own risk.

If you do choose to contact the surgery via email this will be considered as patient consent to reply via email. We endeavour to reply to all incoming emails to the reception email account (info@greenhillshealthhub.com.au) and the Practice Manager's email account (claire@peppertreegp.com.au) within 1 business day. Our emails are checked on a regular basis, however they are not constantly monitored. If you have an issue that requires urgent attention, we request that you contact the practice via telephone.

Any incoming emails to the reception email will prompt the auto-response:

Thank you for contacting GreenHills Health Hub.

This is an automated response to confirm that we have received your email. Our team will review your enquiry and respond within one business day.

Please note that email is not monitored continuously and should not be used for urgent matters. If your enquiry is urgent, please contact the practice directly on 02 8378 4206. If you require emergency medical assistance, please call 000 immediately or attend your nearest Emergency Department.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Kind regards,

GreenHills Health Hub
02 9178 9031
www.greenhillshealthhub.com.au

Any incoming emails to the Practice Manager's email will prompt the auto-response:

Thank you for contacting Claire Grant (Practice Manager, Peppertree GP and GreenHills Health Hub).

This is an automated response to confirm that I have received your email. I will review your enquiry and respond within two business days. Please note that my usual working days are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Please note that my email is not monitored continuously and should not be used for urgent matters. If your enquiry is urgent, please contact the practice directly on 02 8378 4206 (Peppertree GP) or 02 9178 9031 (GreenHills Health Hub). If you require emergency medical assistance, please call 000 immediately or attend your nearest Emergency Department.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Kind regards,
Claire Grant

On occasions where we do send patient correspondence as attachments via email, we do so encrypted and password protected. This is either done directly from our Practice Management Software, or using 7-zip to encrypt and password protect an attachment.

SMN

Authorisation for SMN contact requires:

- patient signature in the appropriate section of our New Patient Registration Form (scanned/imported to patient file).
- Confirmation of mobile number at each visit.

Patients must be aware that if another person can access their mobile phone, then the confidentiality of these communications cannot be protected by the practice.

The patient is informed the SMN:

- does not to include sensitive health information (e.g. pathology results).
- is included in their health record.

Our practice SMN reminder system:

- records the reminder in the patient file.
- allows the practice to access the record of the SMS reminders sent.
- the practice has access to the patient responses to the SMS reminders.
- the practice can identify an SMN reminder sent to a patient for a flagged recall or reminder and the response from the patient to ensure appropriate action is taken.
- SMN are forwarded via HotDoc, if patient does not respond the practice staff call the patient, which is recorded in the patient file.

SMN messages are sent for a variety of health management purposes. These may include:

- **Appointment reminders** – a reminder message will be sent the day prior to an appointment.
- **Clinical Reminders** (e.g. cervical screening/care plans etc).
- **Recalls** (e.g. follow up of test results)

Post

Letters may be sent offering services available to eligible patients, for health reminders, recalls and debt collection. This will occur if the patient does not have a mobile number or email address, they have opted out of electronic messaging, or they do not respond to previous communication attempts.

Incoming mail is collected and opened each day. Letters received that are patient related are directly imported in the patient's medical record/doctor's inbox. These are then reviewed and actioned by the doctor. All remaining letters are provided to the addressee.

All outgoing mail is recorded. Mail is posted twice a week.

Website

The practice's website is updated regularly with new information. You can also locate our opening hours, history of the practice, information regarding our fees and services, book appointments online, view our doctors' profiles and see our contact information.

Facebook

Our Facebook page provides general health updates and practice information. This page, however, is intended for announcements only by GreenHills Health Hub and not for the provision of individual medical advice. If you have any queries or questions, we ask that you please contact the practice via telephone.

Translation and Interpreter Service (TIS) for Non-English-speaking background (NESB) patients.

Our practice recommends non-English speaking background (NESB) patients use a professional interpreter service to assist them during consultations. They may wish to enlist a translator who is a family member or friend, however we discourage children from translating on their parent's behalf. In some cases, having a family member or friend translate is also not appropriate, for the following important reasons:

- the patient may be reluctant to disclose information to someone they know.
- a relative or friend may inadvertently or deliberately relay biased translation of information.

The use of a professional interpreter service can:

- enhance our provision of quality patient care.
- ensure confidentiality.
- understand the importance of risk management.
- provide efficient, effective communication of information in sometimes time-critical situations
- always adhere to professional conduct, not being emotionally involved with patients.

Our healthcare providers document in the patient's healthcare record details of the interpreter service used for the patient consultation.

The Administration Staff are responsible for booking these services when needed. The service is free for Dr Mohammed and Dr Sura. There is a fee for Dr Madeeha and Dr Sathya as they are only providing a private service, not a Medicare rebatable service.

To book translation or interpreter services:

- Call Australia's TIS National (131 450 for immediate phone interpreting, or the Doctors Priority Line 1300 575 847) or contact a local agency, providing details like language, date, time, purpose, and location.
- Book online via service portals for in-person, video, or phone interpretation, often using a registered client code if applicable.

Culturally appropriate, translated, and/or in plain English resources

Our practice provides culturally appropriate support materials in a variety of languages. Translated health information is available from:

- NSW Health, Multicultural Health Communication Service
- Department of Health, Disability and Ageing Translation Services
- Victoria State Government, Health Translations

Our administration team can be requested to organise or support patients and their carers to organise these services.

National Relay Service (NRS)

NRS is for deaf and hearing-impaired patients.
For NSR, the patient does not need to book ahead, they just use their preferred method (SMS, NRS App or Voice Relay) to connect to a Relay Officer (RO), who connects them to their desired number. Our reception team can assist patients wishing to access the NRS.

National Auslan Interpreter Booking Service (NABS)/National Sign Language Program (NSLP)

Our practice can assist patients to access the NABS. The NABS provides NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) certified interpreters for private medical appointments for deaf and hard of hearing people who use sign language. This service is funded by the NDIS for those who are eligible, under 65 years.

Monday- Friday 8am – 6pm, out of hours also available.
Call: 1800 246 945
Email: bookings@nabs.org.au
SMS: 0409143980

For patients 65 years or over who do not have a NDIS Plan, our practice staff can assist you to book a free sign language interpreter through the National Sign Language Program (NSLP) funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, administered by Deaf Connect.

SMS only: 0476857251
FaceTime: 0407647591
Call: 1300773803
Email: interpreting@deafconnect.org.au
Book Online: https://bookings.deafconnect.org.au/

Current as of:	7/07/2027	**Version:**	2.1
Amendments			
Date of amendment:	**Version:**	**Details of amendment:**	
7./07/2026	2.1	Addition of NABS and NSLP	
23/06/2026	2.0	Addition of email auto-response and TIS/NRS info	
20/04/2026	1.0	New policy	