Internet and Email Policy

Good Health Greenhills recognises the practice team requires access to email and the internet to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of health care services to our patients. Good Health Greenhills supports the right of staff to have access to reasonable personal use of the internet and email communications in the workplace using the devices and networks provided by the practice.

Staff are mindful that even if Patients have provided electronic contact details, they may not be proficient in communicating via electronic means and client choice should be obtained before using electronic communication.

Patients can obtain advice or information related to their care or appointment reminders by electronic means, where the doctor determines that a face-to-face consultation is unnecessary. Electronic communication includes: email, fax, and SMS.

Practice staff and doctors determine how they communicate electronically with clients, both receiving and sending messages. All significant electronic contact with Patients is recorded in the client health records.

Practice staff and doctors should be aware of alternative modes of communication used by the disabled.

Patients are advised in the Good Health Greenhills information sheet that they can request our written policy on receiving and returning electronic communication.

**Purpose and Objectives**

This policy sets out guidelines for acceptable use of internet and email by the practice team, contractors and other staff of the Good Health Greenhills. Internet and email is provided primarily to assist the team carry out their duties of employment.

**Scope**

The internet and email policy applies to the practice team, contractors and other staff of the Good Health Greenhills who access the internet and email on practice owned devices, including, but not limited to list of practice owned devices which have email capability the practice team can access as part of their work, internet and network access this could include desk phones, smartphones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, iPads and other tablet devices to perform their work.

Use of the internet by the practice team, contractors and other staff is permitted and encouraged where this supports the goals and objectives of the Good Health Greenhills access to the internet is a privilege and the practice team, contractors and other staff must adhere to this policy.

Violation of these policies could result in disciplinary and/or legal action, termination of employment, the practice team, contractors and other staff being held personally liable for damages caused by any violations of this policy. All employees are required to confirm they have understood and agree to abide by this email and internet policy.

**Policy Content**

The practice team, contractors and other staff may use the internet and email access provided by Good Health Greenhills for:

* Any work and work-related purposes
* Limited personal use
* More extended personal use and specific circumstances (see below)

**Limited personal use of email and internet**

Limited personal use is permitted where it:

* Is used infrequently and briefly
* Does not interfere with the duties of the practice team, contractors and other staff
* Does not interfere with the operation of the practice
* Does not impact on the practice electronic storage capacity
* Does not decrease the practice network performance (eg large email attachments can decrease system performance and potentially cause system outages)
* Does not incur any additional expense for the practice
* Does not violate any legislation
* Does not compromise any confidentiality requirements of the practice and any personal opinion is clearly stated as such

Examples of what could be considered reasonable personal use might include:

* Conducting a brief online bank transaction
* Paying a bill
* Sending a brief personal email, similar to making a brief personal phone call

**Unacceptable internet and email use**

The practice team, contractors and other staff may not use internet or email access provided by Good Health Greenhills to:

* Create or exchange messages that are offensive, harassing, obscene or threatening
* Visiting web sites containing objectionable (including pornographic) or criminal material
* Exchanging any confidential or sensitive information held by the practice
* Create, store or exchange information in violation of copyright laws
* Use the internet-enabled activities such as gambling, gaming, conducting a business or conducting illegal activities
* Creating or exchanging advertisements, solicitations, chain letters and other unsolicited illegal activities
* Create or exchange advertisements, solicitations, chain letters and other unsolicited or bulk email
* Playing electronic or online games in work time.

**Communication with Patients via electronic means**

(e.g. email and Fax) is conducted with appropriate regard to the privacy Laws relating to health information and confidentiality of the Patients health information or the risks associated with electronic communication in that the information could be intercepted or read by someone other than the intended recipient.

**Staff and Patients using email/SMS or other forms of electronic messaging**

Staff and Patients should be aware that it is not possible to guarantee that electronic communications will be private. All personal health information or sensitive information sent by email must be securely encrypted.

Patients can request information to be sent via email (without encryption) however, Patients must be informed this form of communication is not secure. Consent must be obtained from the client to release the information in this format.

When an email message is sent or received in the course of a person’s duties, that message is a business communication and therefore constitutes an official record.

Internal or external parties, including Patients may send electronic messages. Messages from Patients or those of clinical significance require a response to confirm receipt and should be documented in the client medial record if appropriate.

Employees should be aware that electronic communications could, depending on the technology, be forwarded, intercepted, printed and stored by others. Electronic mail is the equivalent of a post card.

Staff members have full accountability for emails sent in their name or held in their mailbox and are expected to utilise this communication tool in an acceptable manner.

Good Health Greenhills reserves the right to check individual email as a precaution to fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by employees. Inappropriate use of the email facility will be fully investigated and may be grounds for dismissal.

Good Health Greenhills uses an email disclaimer notice on outgoing emails that are affiliated with the Health Service.

The disclaimer is as follows:

The information in this email message is intended for the sole confidential use of the designated recipients and may contain confidential information. If you have received this information in error, any review, dissemination, distribution or copying of this information is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify me immediately and reroute back to sender.

**Accessing the Internet**

The Internet is a vast computer network, comprised of individual networks and computers all around the world that communicate with each other to allow information sharing between users. It is important to adopt secure practices when accessing and using the Internet.

The Internet can be accessed by all members of staff; however, excessive use of the Internet is not acceptable.

Staff members are encouraged to use the Internet for research activities pertaining to their role, however, should be aware that usage statistics are recorded and submitted to management as required.

Good Health Greenhills reserves the right to check individual’s internet history as a precaution to fraud, viruses, workplace harassment or breaches of confidence by employees. Inappropriate use of the internet facility will be fully investigated and may be grounds for dismissal.

**Good Health Greenhills Website**

In complying with the Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000, our practice provides the following advice to users of our website about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

The aim of this advice is to inform users of this site about:

* what personal information is being collected;
* who is collecting personal information;
* how personal information is being used;
* access to personal information collected on this site; and
* security of personal information collected on this site.

Good Health Greenhills privacy policy is posted on the website and available for download.