

# Using secure messaging in general practice

## What is secure messaging?

Secure messaging provides a confidential and secure way for healthcare organisations to exchange clinical documents and patient information, as traditional methods like fax, email, and post are not secure. It uses encryption and authentication to ensure that messages are private and can only be accessed by authorised individuals, which is crucial for maintaining patient confidentiality. This secure exchange supports better coordination of care across different providers.

## Why use secure messaging?

Secure messaging integrates efficiently into clinical workflows, provides a single channel for correspondence and enables an audit trail of successful delivery. Additionally, secure messaging provides time and cost savings through integration with clinical software, automation of tasks and postage cost savings.

Patient and clinical information sent via post, fax or email that is not encrypted may put patient privacy and confidentiality at risk.

## Benefits for General Practice

- Streamline communication between providers using a single channel for referrals and messaging
- Reduced administrative burden around processing correspondence, scanning and faxing
- Reduce clerical error rates by reducing manual data collection
- Increased confidence on successful delivery of referrals with audit trails and response receipts
- Increased privacy and security vs email and paper communications

## Benefits for Patients

- Patient data being appropriately and securely managed
- Efficient receipt of referrals and streamlined access to services
- Improved clinical decisions due to the right information being available at the point of care

## Example Scenario of Secure Messaging in a General Practice

Jordan visits the practice, and the GP determines that Jordan requires specialist care. This is a new referral that the GP proceeds to prepare.

General practice with secure messaging	General practice without secure messaging
<p>GP can generate a referral for the patient:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created by the software</li> <li>• GP can tailor the referral letter</li> <li>• Sends referral immediately to the specialist via the secure messaging vendor</li> <li>• GP receives confirmation it was received</li> </ul>	<p>Paper referral needs to be generated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement for download and print</li> <li>• Email's the referral and hands a copy to the patient</li> <li>• Follow up is required to confirm receipt</li> </ul>

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General practice with secure messaging	General practice without secure messaging
<p>Potential Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The patient's referral is streamlined</li> <li>The risks and burdens associated with non-electronic referrals are eliminated</li> </ul> <p>Patient Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jordan's transfer of care to the specialist has been easier and they can look forward to arranging their appointment promptly</li> </ul>	<p>Potential Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk of referral email going to junk email folder, wrong recipient or being rejected by the system</li> <li>Patient needs to follow up with the specialist</li> <li>Delayed receipt of referral, practice requested to resend, or patient asked to send the referral</li> </ul> <p>Patient Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jordan has been stressed to get their referral to the specialist quickly and this has potentially delayed their specialist appointment and care</li> </ul>

## How to start using secure messaging

To implement secure messaging into practice there are processes a practice needs to consider:

- Capability and system compatibility
- Ensuring compliance with legislation
- Setting up and accessing the service
- Learning and integration into practice

Refer to the resources for specific guidance on each process to set up and use secure messaging

The checklists and overviews provide step by step directions.

## Resources

Acronyms	
<b>ADHA:</b> Australian Digital Health Agency	<b>HPOS:</b> Health Professional online services
<b>AHPA:</b> Allied Health Professionals Association	<b>MHR:</b> My Health Record
<b>CSP:</b> Contracted Service Provider	<b>NASH:</b> National Authentication Service for Health
<b>CIS:</b> Clinical information system	<b>PKI:</b> Public Key infrastructure
<b>HI:</b> Health Identifier	<b>PRODA:</b> Provider Digital Access

Implementation Support	
<b>Checklists &amp; Overviews:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Secure Messaging Summary   ADHA</a></li> <li><a href="#">Implementation guide and checklist   ADHA</a> Step-by-step guide that includes choosing a secure messaging provider, registering with the Health Identifiers Service and implementing secure messaging in your practice</li> <li><a href="#">Fact Sheet &amp; User guide   ADHA</a> Sending and receiving secure messages</li> </ul>

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V2 / October 2025

Implementation Support	
Capability:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Secure messaging conformance register   ADHA</a></li> </ul>
Compliance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Secure messaging policy template   RACGP</a></li> <li><a href="#">RACGP Standards Criterion c6.3 C   RACGP</a></li> </ul>
Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Set-up: HI's   PRODA   HPOS   NASH PKI</a> Ensure your practice and practitioners are linked to your organisation in HPOS and the practice has a NASH security certificate installed on the CIS.</li> <li><a href="#">Configuration &amp; considerations   healthvital IT</a> Vendors   Messaging Templates   Clinical software examples</li> <li><a href="#">Connection guide for secure messaging   AHPA</a> The last page of this guide easily compares vendors</li> <li><a href="#">Referral form templates   WA Central Referral Service</a></li> </ul>
Learning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Frequently asked questions   ADHA</a> Troubleshooting   Setting up</li> </ul> <p>Contact your secure messaging vendor(s) for process support.</p>

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