

Practices need to consider what content is safe and appropriate to send and discuss via electronic messaging and the methods to do so. The following table highlights the ways general practices can communicate with patients, clinicians, external organisations and internal practice staff.

Method	How does it work?	Who is it suitable for?	Availability of this function	
Password protected documents or files	Password protecting files that you send by email is a way to increase their security. The recipient needs to know the password, which could be agreed in advance, or else has to be sent separately.	Patients Clinicians Practice staff	Most software that produces text or other documents offers password protection of those documents.	
File hosting or cloud storage services	An Internet hosting service specifically designed to host user files. It allows users to upload files that could then be accessed over the internet from a different computer, tablet, smart phone or other networked device, by the same user or possibly by other users, after a password or other authentication is provided. Most products will include the necessary security certificate.	Clinicians Practice Staff	For more information go to the RACGP Digital Business Kits http://www.racgp.org.au/digitalbusiness-kit/cloud-computing/ and http://www.digitalbusiness.gov.au/tools/cloudcomputing/ .	
Encryption software	<p>Encrypting your messages before sending them renders them unreadable from the start to the point at which the intended recipient opens them. To secure your email effectively, encryption is required at the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the connection from your email provider (the channel) 2. your actual email messages (the message) 3. your stored, cached, or archived email messages. <p>The technology for this is readily available, but most patients have not equipped themselves for this or understand the implications of sending health information unencrypted.</p>	Patients Clinician Practice Staff	<p>Software available:</p> <p>7-Zip (Windows) AxCrypt (Windows) Cryptext (Windows) Disk Utility (Mac) dsCrypt (Windows) Encrypt4all (Windows) FreeOTFE/FreeOTFE Explorer (Windows/Linux)</p>	<p>GNU Privacy Guard (Windows/Mac/Linux) Instant LOCK (Windows) Remora USB File Guard (Windows) Rohos Mini Drive (Windows) SafeHouse Explorer (Windows) Sofonica Folder Soldier (Windows) Sophos Free Encryption (Windows) TrueCrypt (Windows/Mac/Linux)</p>
Communication via secure Website portal	<p>A web based communication tool allows patients to send requests directly to their doctor without the need to visit the surgery. Patients can request services such as appointments, prescription renewals, pathology test follow up and referral letters thus saving the time and expense of going to the doctor's practice. Communicating through a secure practice website helps medical practices improve their workflow while increasing patient satisfaction.</p> <p>Practices can create their own secure Website, or do so through commercial providers, who have created mechanisms to facilitate the payment of fees that the practice wishes to charge for the various services. Practice's secure Websites should conform with Standard 12.5 of the current edition of the RACGP Computer Information and Security Standards.</p>	Patients	<p>Your Practice Healthsite</p> <p>Your Health</p> <p>OzDocsOnline</p> <p>mydr.com.au</p>	
Secure messaging or Secure message delivery (SMD)	<p>Secure Messaging is a method of sending clinical documents and/or sensitive information between two parties over the internet using encryption. This can be server, software or portal based.</p> <p>Secure Message Delivery (SMD) is an Australian Standard (AS5552 -2013) that supports the secure delivery of messages between two healthcare organisation endpoints, either directly or indirectly through via one or more messaging service providers.</p> <p>SMD software designed for use by general practices allows GPs to send letters and other messages from within their clinical software securely, and it imports incoming letters and other messages into the GP's clinical in box, which enables the letter or message to be filed easily into the patient's clinical record. SMD is now widely integrated into secure messaging products, commercial SMD interoperability between ReferralNet and Argus is available.</p>	Clinicians	Refer to the NeHTA SMD Product list	

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