

Privacy & Pathology

Pathology is a specialist medical service

The quality of our service depends on the accuracy of our information, including the details we collect from you. This brochure shows what you can expect from Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology under the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs).

What you can expect

- We need your consent to collect information about you
- We use this information to be able to provide you with reliable results and provide your doctors with helpful advice
- We aim to be fair in the way we collect information
- Most information is collected at the time that a pathology request is written out by your doctor. Your doctor will generally explain why he or she is recording the information and where it is going to.
- Where you visit a pathology collection centre and more information is sought, you will be asked if it is OK to collect that information
- The systems used to store patient details are audited as part of our laboratory accreditation to ensure they are reliable and secure
- The best way to receive your results is in consultation with your doctor, so that they can be explained in the context of your health care. You may, however, request access to information we hold about you.
- You may discuss any concerns you have about how we handle your information. Contact details for the Privacy Officer at Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology are provided in this brochure.
- Your contact information may be used for matters relating to pathology sample collection and billing, particularly with regard to the delivery of invoices, reminders and expediting of payments. This could, for example, include the use of SMS reminders and the referral of unpaid invoices to a third party debt collection agency.

Sonic Healthcare has produced this brochure for the patients of all its practices. We believe, but make no warranty, that this reflects best practice under the Australian Privacy Act.

Further information & complaints

Privacy Officer – (07) 3377 8666 E: privacy@snp.com.au P: Toll Free 1800 777 877 for callers outside the Brisbane area.

To obtain copies of pathology results:

Patient Results Enquiry – (07) 3377 8756 (Monday – Friday 9 am – 5 pm (excluding public holidays)

P: Toll Free 1800 777 877 for callers outside the Brisbane area.

Federal Privacy Commissioner – Hotline 1300 363 992 www.privacy.gov.au

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The Australian Privacy Principles

Protecting privacy throughout the pathology information life cycle

5 Use of information & disclosure

Use of information within the organisation and disclosure to third parties

Use & disclosure and trans-border data flows

- Information is used within the laboratory for producing results and advice and delivering these to your specified health providers
- In the routine pathology process, health information may be disclosed to another provider for the purposes of getting a second opinion, or where the test is a special one, the test (with the associated information) may be referred to another more appropriate laboratory
- In very rare instances this may be outside of Australia, in which case, your privacy will continue to be protected
- There are some statutory requirements for reporting test results to registries
- Information is used for billing

Identifiers

- Government identifiers are used, where necessary, for billing
- Any identity information may be used by a pathology practice to ensure that an individual and his or her results are linked in confidence

4 Access (by the individual)

Access & correction

- The preferred way to get your pathology results is in consultation with your doctor, where results can be explained in the context of your health management
- Individuals do, however, have the right to access to their pathology records
- A written request is required and, depending on how old the information is, there may be a charge
- Information collected or generated before 21 December 2001 may not be available
- To protect your privacy, individuals may require positive identification

1 Information comes from

- Individual (subject)
- Requester (staff)
- Responsible person
- Other health service providers, including hospitals, clinics and other pathology practices
- Internal records
- Insurers and institutions
- Government instrumentalities including Department of Veterans Affairs, Transport Accident Commission (Vic), WorkCover, Prison, Police, Courts
- Organisations, e.g. Commercial and Occupational Health, such as in mining

2 Collecting information

Collection

Information is collected to:

- Link pathology reports to individuals and their health care providers
- Ensure appropriate testing
- Make a diagnosis and interpret results
- Seek confirmation or to fulfil testing requirements from third parties where appropriate
- Have available for future reference when determining trends or significant changes
- Allow billing and payments
- Facilitate the pathology sample collection process
- Fulfil regulatory and public health requirements
- Assure quality and improve processes

Sensitive information

- Sensitive information is collected, stored, used and accessed with due regard for privacy, in accordance with the 'Privacy Policy in Community Pathology' published by the AAPP
- An individual can choose to suppress some information and to limit the transfer of reports to specified parties
- In some circumstances, responsible persons can give consent on behalf of another individual

Anonymity

An individual may have a test anonymously but this can be dangerous. An individual choosing to do this must be aware of the potential consequences, including that:

- Diagnosis and advice may be seriously impaired with consequent adverse medical outcomes
- There may be a mismatching of the individual's results
- There must be an acceptance that there is a consequent limitation to the liability of the pathology practice
- It may result in breakdown in good public health practice
- The service can not be claimed under Medicare

3 Storage & maintenance

Data quality

- Every effort is made to keep an individual's information accurate, up-to-date and complete
- You are entitled to see your records and request changes to improve the accuracy of the information. This request should be made in writing.

Data security

- Pathology information has restricted access and any changes are tracked
- Accreditation of pathology laboratories requires physical and electronic security of information

