

Secure messaging

This guide provides important information about how to use secure messaging in your practice, including:

- drafting communications using templates
- using unique secure messaging identifiers
- identifying other providers around you and adding them to your address book
- checking your message audit trail
- receiving secure messages.

Note: This guide assumes secure messaging systems have been set up in your practice. The [Secure Messaging Implementation Guide](#) provides step-by-step guidance about how to set up secure messaging

Together, these steps will support you in using secure messaging to securely exchange clinical information with other healthcare providers.

STEP **1** ▶ **Sending a secure message**

STEP **2** ▶ **Receiving a secure message**

STEP **3** ▶ **Additional resources**

Step 1: Sending a secure message

The process for sending secure messages is similar to the process used to send correspondence via other channels (e.g. physical mail, fax, etc.). The following provides an outline of the key steps. Your clinical information system vendor and secure messaging provider should also be able to provide guidance and education about using secure messaging.

▶ Create message

Use your clinical information system (or other tools used in your practice) to create the message. The type of messages you send will depend on your practice but may include referrals and specialist letters.

Your practice might have templates for common message types that pre-populate details from a patient record to save time and improve consistency. The [Secure Messaging Implementation Guide](#) has additional information about using templates.

▶ Finding secure messaging details

Secure message contact details can be found in several ways:

- **Published contact details** – it is good practise for clinicians and practices to publish their secure message contact details on correspondence, letterheads and websites.
- **Services directory** – clinician and practice details are held in online directories such as the [National Health Services Directory \(NHSD\)](#) and other referral or specialist directories. Your clinical information system will be able to search these directories to identify the appropriate recipient for the message and retrieve the technical information from a secure messaging provider directory to enable message delivery.
- **Secure message provider directory** – secure messaging systems include access to online directories that enable you to search for other healthcare providers. Some secure messaging providers also provide functionality that allows you to search a specific geographic area. This can be a helpful tool to enable you to find a clinician close to where a patient lives or works.
- **Clinical information system directory** – your clinical information system may also have address book functionality that can store frequently used secure message contact details.

▶ Send secure message

Complete your message and send it via your clinical information system and secure message system. Sending secure messages should be similar to the process used for sending via other channels such as eFax.

Your clinical information system vendor and secure messaging provider should also be able to provide guidance and education about using secure messaging.

▶ Confirm delivery of secure message

Secure messaging provides confirmation of successful delivery of secure messages through the mandatory acknowledgements. You should be able to view this verification via your clinical information system.

Your clinical information system vendor and secure messaging provider should also be able to provide guidance and education.

Step 2: Receiving a secure message

Receiving secure messages should be similar to the process used to receive correspondence via other electronic channels (e.g. eFax). Many clinical information systems include notification functionality that can let you know when a secure message (such as a new referral) has been received. Your clinical information system vendor and secure messaging provider should also be able to provide guidance and education.

Change starts with you

Clinicians routinely report the desire to make increased use of secure paperless communications¹. The benefits of secure messaging are significant for individual practices and for the health system as a whole.² One of the barriers to more widespread adoption is peer behaviour.

You can contribute to improving secure messaging adoption by:

- using secure messaging as your preferred method of sending and receiving communication
- encouraging your peers still using other forms of communication to use secure messaging.

Additional resources

- [Secure Messaging Fact Sheet](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
 - [Secure Messaging Frequently Asked Questions](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
 - [Secure Messaging Implementation Guide](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
 - [Connection Guide for Secure Messaging](#) | AHPA
 - [Help Centre](#) | Australian Digital Health Agency
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- 1 Hughes, C., Allen, P., and Bentley, M., (2018), 'eReferrals: Why are we still faxing', *Australian Journal of General Practice* 47:1-2, doi: doi: 10.31128/AFP-07-17-4285.
- 2 Haun, N., et. al., (2017), 'Clinical Practice Informs Secure Messaging Benefits and Best Practices', *Applied Clinical Informatics*, 8(4): 1003-1011. Published online 2017 Dec 14. doi: 10.4338/ACI-2017-05-RA-0088.

