

Privacy, confidentiality and ethical practice

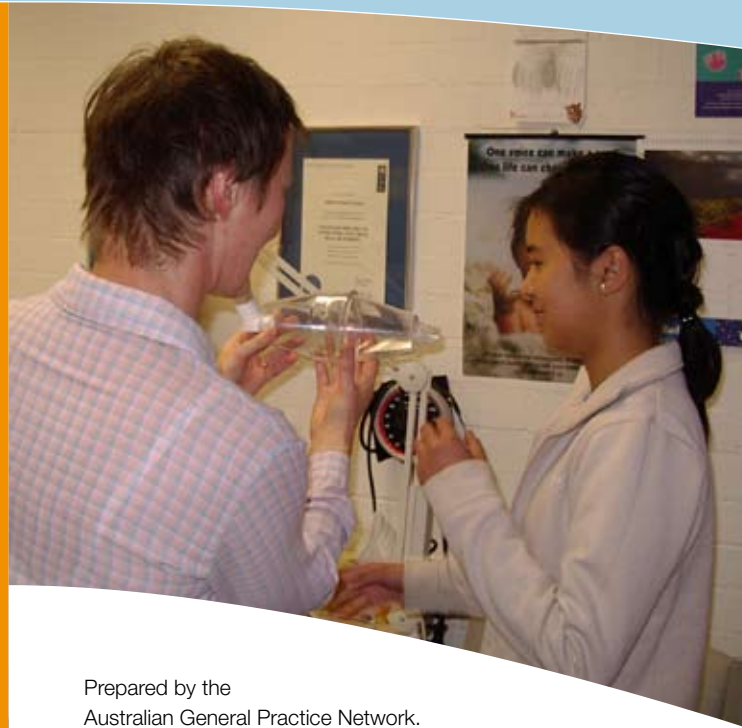
Nursing in General Practice

All nurses in Australia must adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct and the Code of Ethics, set by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council. Nurses must adhere to privacy principles as part of their professional conduct and are required to treat personal information obtained in a professional capacity as confidential.

Do I need to pay to see a nurse?

Generally, the cost of the service provided by the nurse is part of the payment made to your GP. However, in some instances there is a fee charged for a service provided by the nurse on behalf of your GP, such as a wound dressing, immunisation or Pap smear. Your practice will advise you of any charges that apply.

For further information on the practice nurse/s and their role in this practice please speak to your general practitioner.



Prepared by the
Australian General Practice Network.

*Promoting community health and wellbeing through
the General Practice Network and primary care teams.*

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Information for patients

Now there's an important new member of the team at many general practices. Over 57% of general practices in Australia now employ at least one practice nurse.

Like other countries such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand, Australia has recognised the important role for practice nurses in enhancing the health care services your GP provides, particularly in the areas of patient education, health promotion and chronic disease care.

The benefits for you

Nurses are highly trained professionals who provide valuable support to general practitioners. Nurses have different skills and responsibilities from GPs and they work closely with your GP to respond to your needs. Sometimes you might feel more comfortable discussing aspects of your care or asking questions of a nurse, rather than the GP.

Having access to a nurse may reduce your waiting time and increase the range of services available at the practice.

Nurses are team players who work closely with all members of the general practice team to improve the care provided to patients. Nurses are not a substitute for the GP and it remains your choice as to whether you see the GP or the nurse, or you may at times see both.

What practice nurses do

Nurses work together with your general practitioner and other members of the practice team, to provide safe, quality care. Their roles in general practice can vary from practice to practice depending on patient needs, the category of nurse employed, and the roles designated by your GP.

Some of the common duties nurses undertake in general practice are: triage, health assessments, wound management, immunisation, first aid, administering medications, blood collection, taking patient histories, care planning and reminder and recall of patients. Many nurses are also involved in patient education for diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and healthy lifestyles. Some nurses undertake women's health checks including Pap Smears.

Nurses can also play a key role in coordinating your care and speaking up on your behalf, arranging appointments and helping you to navigate the health system.



Practice nurses are highly qualified

A nurse in general practice will be either a registered or enrolled nurse, and the minimum qualifications are:

Registered Nurse

A person who has undertaken a bachelor level education program of not less than three years (prior to 1985, training was hospital based) and is licensed to practice nursing under an Australian State or Territory Nurses Act. ¹

Enrolled Nurse

A person who has undertaken a shorter program of education (usually in a vocational education setting e.g. TAFE) and is licensed under an Australian State or Territory Nurses Act to provide nursing care under the supervision of a Registered Nurse.ⁱ

In Victoria a registered nurse is known as registered nurse (Division 1) and enrolled nurses as registered nurse (Division 2).

Similar to general practitioners, it is illegal for a person who is not registered or enrolled to use the title of nurse. Nurses in general practice attend regular education and training programs specific to their role in general practice to maintain their skills and knowledge.

¹Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2000) National Competency Standards for Registered Nurses. AMNC Canberra.