

MDU Privacy Policy

MDU (the Microbiological Diagnostic Unit) uses patient-related health information (personal information) in order to perform its work of identifying pathogenic organisms in specimens.

Our processes of collecting, using, storing and releasing this personal information are subject to the Australian Privacy Act 1998 and the accompanying Australian Privacy Principles (2012).

The kinds of personal information we collect and store are identification details such as name, date of birth, sex, and address; limited illness-related information such as recent symptoms or overseas travel; and also the results of our own, and occasionally other laboratories', microbiological testing.

Most of the personal information we use is provided to us from our customers such as other laboratories, the health department or councils. It is then entered into a database used for result entry and report issue. Our reports contain the person's identification details plus our results. Some information is also stored in other databases for research and statistical purposes, for example, monitoring the occurrence of certain types of bacteria.

We request personal information for several reasons, as follows. It helps us ensure that our results are associated with the correct person. It allows us to test samples in parallel and provide cumulative results. We use it for billing purposes. Also, if we obtain a microbiological result which is legally notifiable, we must provide the associated personal information to the health department.

In general, personal information is only accessed by those at MDU who need it to perform their work.

However, as mentioned, we are required by law to notify infectious disease results and personal information to the Victorian health department for public health purposes.

In rare circumstances, we may provide personal information, in combination with samples, to other laboratories for needed tests of a type that we do not perform.

Some of the patient-related data we hold for statistical purposes is provided to other health agencies. If data is sent outside MDU to organizations other than the Victorian health department, it is de-identified (eg, patient name, hospital record number, date of birth and address removed; though age, sex and postcode may be retained) unless there is a required circumstance as specified by the Privacy Principles.

If an individual asks to see the information we hold about them, we will endeavour to provide it. In some circumstances, for example, where this would cause a threat to another's health and safety or impact another's privacy, we may not provide it. If personal information is provided and errors are found, we will correct the information when informed.

We will provide more details about the way we handle personal information if requested. If an individual believes we have been responsible for a breach of privacy, we will respond on notification of this.

All requests or concerns regarding personal information should be sent in writing to our Director.

Our contact details are as follows:

Microbiological Diagnostic Unit Public Health Laboratory
Department of Microbiology and Immunology
The University of Melbourne VIC 3010
Ph 8344 5701 (Reception)