

Managing Your Healthcare Records

Managing personal healthcare records is a good idea for several reasons. First, when patients have full knowledge about all their personal health records, they are informed and able to participate more fully in their healthcare. Second, patients may aid their healthcare providers by providing information about when, where and by whom examinations were performed, thus helping to reduce services and costs. Third, when healthcare providers have a comprehensive history of a patient's healthcare services and experiences, they can base future healthcare recommendations on that history.

If you have questions about legal options for managing healthcare records, you should consult a licensed attorney.¹⁻³

Obtaining Records

To begin managing your healthcare information, obtain a copy of records from healthcare providers from whom you have received treatment, such as your physician, audiologist or a healthcare management system office. You will be asked to fill out an authorization for release of information form. Records may be in paper or electronic form. The office or agency providing healthcare records may charge you for costs such as duplicating, labor and postage.

Transferring Records

Sometimes you may need to have your records sent from one healthcare provider to another. In this case, you also will be asked to complete an authorization for the release of information form to facilitate the transfer of records.

Access to Records

A hospital may provide access to your healthcare records to a family member without your authorization if you are unable to consent and a family member is presumed to be acting in your best interest. You also can manage who has access to your healthcare records by specifying a person when you are admitted to a healthcare facility.



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PATIENT PLUS: Well organized healthcare records can help patients receive more effective, efficient and economical healthcare services.

Other Information

In addition to your healthcare records, collect and be able to provide the following information to healthcare providers:

1. Your full name;
2. Date of birth;
3. Permanent mailing address;
4. Health insurance information (make a copy of both sides of your health insurance card);
5. Full name, address and telephone number of your primary care provider;
6. Full names, addresses and telephone numbers of all your healthcare providers (such as your family doctor, dentist or optometrist);
7. Name, address and telephone number of your pharmacy;
8. A current list of:
 - Known allergies
 - Current medications (including over-the-counter or herbal medications)
 - Known reactions to medications
 - History of medical symptoms
 - Past illnesses, including illnesses as a child
 - Past surgeries
 - Parent and family history of illnesses and treatments
 - History of smoking
 - History of using alcohol and/or other drugs

It is important to maintain up-to-date and well organized healthcare records in order to maximize the quality of care that you receive and to ensure the most economically planned healthcare services that are available to you.

REFERENCES

1. Medline Plus, www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/personalmedicalrecords.html
2. Brown, JR. (2006). Your first audiology visit. *ADVANCE for Audiologists*, 8(4), 12-13.
3. Brown, JR. (2005). Understanding the role of the family. *ADVANCE for Audiologists*, 7(5), 14.

