

HIPAA and What It Means for You



What Is a Health Record?

A health record is a collection of all your health information. This can include information from past visits to doctors or other health providers. Your health records are seen by:

- Doctors
- Hospitals
- Pharmacies
- Laboratories
- Your health insurance plan



Health records might show:	You can request your health information from:
X-ray or image testing results	Your physician
Blood test or other lab results	Your health plan (like Medicare)
Vaccine records	Your private health insurance
Information about treatment	The hospital or emergency room
A list of your medicines	Your pharmacist

Health information can be sent by email, fax, or online. You can also get a print copy.



What Is HIPAA?

- HIPAA is a law that gives you, the patient, a right to see and get a copy of your health record. You might need to fill out a form for this.
- Health providers have to give this to you if you ask for it, even if you have not paid your bill.
- HIPAA also means that health providers must keep your health information private unless you tell them otherwise.
- HIPAA states that you have a right to send your health information to anyone you choose. This can be family, caregivers, or yourself. It can be helpful to give a trusted friend or family member access to your health information just in case of emergency.
- HIPAA does **NOT** stop your health providers (like nurses, doctors, pharmacists, etc.) from talking to each other about your treatment or health condition.
- HIPAA **DOES** allow your health provider to share information with you, your family, or friends (with your permission).

HIPAA and What It Means for You



Can I Share Health Information With a Family Member or Friend?

In general, health providers will do all they can to keep your health information private. But if you give permission, they can share your health information with a family member or friend. They might also need to share your health information with a family member or friend in special cases, like after an accident. Some examples of when this might happen are:

- Your doctor might talk about what medicines you take with your daughter who has come to your appointment with you if you say it's okay.
- A nurse might share your treatment plan with your friend who came with you to the emergency room.
- You had an accident and are unconscious. The surgeon might need to talk to your spouse about your condition.

It's important to note that your doctor cannot tell your family member or friend any health information that is not about your current condition. It's important that your health providers respect your wishes about who can and cannot be told information.



Tips for Keeping Your Health Information Safe

- Be careful who you send your health information to. You can risk your privacy by sending it to certain people.
- If your health information is sent to your personal email, it might not be secure.
- Keep printed medical records in a safe and private place.
- Who you want to share health information with is your choice. Your family and friends are an important part of your care, but sometimes you might not want certain people to know certain things. Let your health providers know who is allowed to know your health information.
- If you share a phone with someone, tell your health care provider if it is ok to leave voicemails.

For More Information

- **Department of Health and Human Services:** <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-individuals/guidance-materials-for-consumers/index.html>
- **The Office for Civil Rights:** https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ocr/privacy/hipaa/understanding/consumers/consumer_rights.pdf