

THE PORCH

Access to Information

Patient Information

Health Records

Why we collect information about you

Your doctor and other health professionals caring for you keep records about the treatment and care you receive from the National Health Service. These records help to ensure that you receive the best possible care. Information may be written down in paper records and/or also held on a computer. The records may include:

- Basic details about you, such as address and next of kin
- Contact we have had with you, such as clinic visits
- Notes and reports about your health needs
- Details and records about the treatment and care you receive
- Results of investigations, such as X-rays and laboratory tests
- Relevant information from other health professionals, relatives and those who care for you

How your records are used to help you

Your records are used to guide and administer the care you receive so that:

- The health professionals involved in your care have accurate and up-to-date information to assess your health and decide what care you need at future visits
- Full information is available should you see another doctor, are referred to a specialist or another part of the NHS
- There is a good basis for assessing the type and quality of care you have received

How we keep your records secure and confidential

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Our staff are trained in information security and confidentiality. The Porch Surgery has a strict code of conduct in place to ensure that information about you is safe, whether it is held on paper or on computer.

You may be receiving care from other agencies as well as the NHS, such as Social Services. So that we can all work together to help you we may need to share information about you. We will only ever use or pass on information about you if others involved in your care have a genuine need for it.

We will not disclose your information to third parties without your permission unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as when the health or safety of others is at risk or where the law requires confidential information to be passed on. Anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

How you can access your Health Records

The Data Protection Act 1998 and the Access to Health Records Act 1990 entitles you to find out what information about you is held on computer and in certain manual records. This is known as 'right of subject access'. It applies to your health records.

What do we mean by 'accessing health records'?

This means that you can see and/or have copies of your health records.

Why would I want to access my health records?

You may be leaving the country to take up residence abroad or, you may need to know what's been written in your health records for other reasons. You do not have to tell anyone the reason why you want to access your health records.

Will I have to pay any charges?

No. Not if you are viewing manual health records, and providing they have had something added to them in the 40 days before you applied to access them. If they have not had something added to them in the 40 days before you applied to access them, then you may be asked to pay a fee of £10. If you are viewing automated health records, you may be asked to pay a fee of £10. This is whether or not the records have had something added to them in the 40 days before you applied to access them.

If you require copies of your health records, there would be an administrative fee for photocopying.

It is usual for somebody to be present, to provide any necessary explanations of what is written in your health records. This would usually be a pre-arranged appointment with a doctor.

Are there any dates or time restrictions on health records that I wish to access?

No. You can request access to any health record that you know exists.

How long should it take for my request to be processed?

You should be able to view and/or have copies of your health records within 40 days of your request being made and any necessary fee being paid.

What if I'm requesting access to health records of somebody who has died?

Your rights are different. As the duty of confidentiality survives a patient's death, then you have to have good reasons for wanting access. This may be because you are:

- The patient's personal representative.
- An executor of their will.
- A person granted letters of administration by the probate registry, or
- A person with a claim arising out of the patient's death.

You can only access health records that were made from 1st November 1991. If you are only viewing the health records and providing they had something added to them in the 40 days before you applied to access them, then there is no charge.

If they did not have anything added to them in the 40 days before you applied to access them, then you may be asked to pay a fee of £10.

If you want photocopies of the health records, then you may be charged £10 plus all photocopying and administration charges.

You can ask for somebody to be present, to provide any necessary explanations of what is written in the health records.

Can my request be refused?

Yes. Where the record holder feels that this is likely to cause unwarranted substantial damage or substantial distress to you, then you may be refused access. If you are refused access for this reason, then you have the right to be advised about this refusal. You may also be refused access where your health records contain information about a third party.

How can I access my health records?

You must put your request in writing to your doctor or the Practice Manager.