

This leaflet explains why information is collected about you and the ways in which this information may be used. It also tells you about your right to see your health records and how to gain access to them.

Why does the NHS collect information about you?

To help you:

Your doctor and the team of health professionals caring for you keep records about your health and any treatment or care you receive from the NHS. This information will either be written down (manual records), or held on a computer (electronic records). These records are then used to guide and manage the care you receive. This is to make sure that:

- your doctor, nurse or any other health professional involved in your care has accurate and up-to-date information to assess your health and decide what care you need when you visit in the future
- you are invited to receive routine treatment such as immunisations and screening
- there is a good basis for assessing the type and quality of care you have received. This will lead to better care both for you and for other patients
- your concerns can be properly investigated if you need to complain about the care you receive



- if you see another doctor, or are referred to a specialist or another part of the NHS, they can see your medical history

You may also be receiving care from organisations outside the NHS (like social services). If so we may need to share some information about you so that everyone involved in your care can work together for your benefit. Information about you will only be used or passed on if others involved with your care genuinely need it.



THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Your information may be used for reasons other than your direct care, and this leaflet explains when this might happen. Whenever this is necessary, your information will be handled in the strictest confidence and will be subject to the principles of confidentiality. These principles are legally binding to ensure the highest standard possible is applied at all times.

- Whenever possible only information that does not show who you are will be passed on to others and only when they genuinely need it.
- Only the minimum amount of information needed will be passed on.
- Anyone receiving information about you is under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

To help others:

Your information may be used to help protect the health of other people and to help create new services and healthcare methods in the future.

Under the law, your doctor may have to give information to certain organisations.

- Under the 1984 Public Health (Control of Disease) Act and the 1988 Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations doctors have to pass on information that is needed to prevent the outbreak of certain diseases. If you have an infectious disease which might endanger the safety of others (e.g. meningitis or measles but NOT HIV/AIDS) then your doctors will tell the relevant organisations.
- The 2001 Health and Social Care Act (Section 60) allows certain organisations to ask for essential information from your GP or hospital in order to carry out their work. This is strictly controlled and is only allowed after an application has been made to and approved by the Secretary of State for Health.



Some services need information to support research and follow trends in diseases. This makes sure that:

- healthcare organisations can plan ahead and provide the right services to the right people
- progress can be made in diagnosing and managing diseases
- drugs can be made more effective for example, by reducing side effects

To help the NHS:

Your information is also used to help manage the NHS. It may be used to:

- review the care given to patients to make sure it is of the highest possible standard
- make sure services are planned to meet patients' needs in the future
- investigate complaints, legal claims or important incidents
- pay your GP, dentist, optician, pharmacists (chemist) and hospital for the care they give you
- check and report on how effective the NHS has been
- make sure that the NHS and its services give value for money



How you can get access to your own health records?

The 1998 Data Protection Act allows you to find out what information is being held on computer and in manual records. This is known as a "right of subject access", and it applies to all of your health records.

If you want to see your health records, write to your GP or the hospital where you are being treated. You are entitled to either look at your records or to receive a copy, but should note that a charge (up to £50) will usually be made. In exceptional circumstances your right to see some details in your health records may be limited in your own interest or in the vital interest of others.

Further Information:

If you would like to know more about how we use your information or if, for any reason, you do not wish to have your information used in any of the ways described in this leaflet, please speak to the health professionals involved in your care. You can also contact the Data Protection Officer or "Caldicott Guardian" of the NHS organisation - such as the hospital, clinic or GP surgery - where you are being treated.

your
information
your
rights

