

# information about your health

*Why we collect it and how it is used*

## Will my information be seen by anybody outside of the NHS?

Everyone involved in your care needs to have relevant information about you. You may be receiving care from other people as well as the NHS. For example, health and social work professionals may work closely together to provide care, or you may be receiving services from an organisation outside the NHS, such as a residential or day care centre.

We may need to share some information about you to help us work together for your benefit. We only pass on information if it is needed for your care, and normally only with your consent.

We won't release information about you to your relatives, friends or carers unless you say we can.

## Can information about me ever be shared without consent?

In exceptional circumstances information about you may be shared without your consent.

- If it is required by law, for instance the notification of births, deaths and some infectious diseases
- To protect the public or yourself from harm, for example, where issues of child or adult protection are raised

## Can I stop the NHS using information about me?

You can stop the NHS using your information for some purposes such as teaching and research. However, we do this work for the benefit of everyone in the community so we hope that you will let us use your information. Your healthcare will not be affected if you ask us not to use your information for a particular purpose.

## Can I see my health records?

- Yes, you have a right to see your medical records and to have any part of it you do not understand explained to you
- There are some cases where we may refuse access to some, or all, of your information if seeing it would cause serious harm to your health or the health of someone else
- You may also be refused access to information that identifies another person where they have not consented to you seeing it. (This does not apply if the other person is a health professional.)
- You are entitled to receive a copy of some or all of your information but please note a charge may be made

## What if I'm not happy with how my information is used?

If you are not happy with the way we have collected, used or shared your information then you have a right to complain.

## Further information

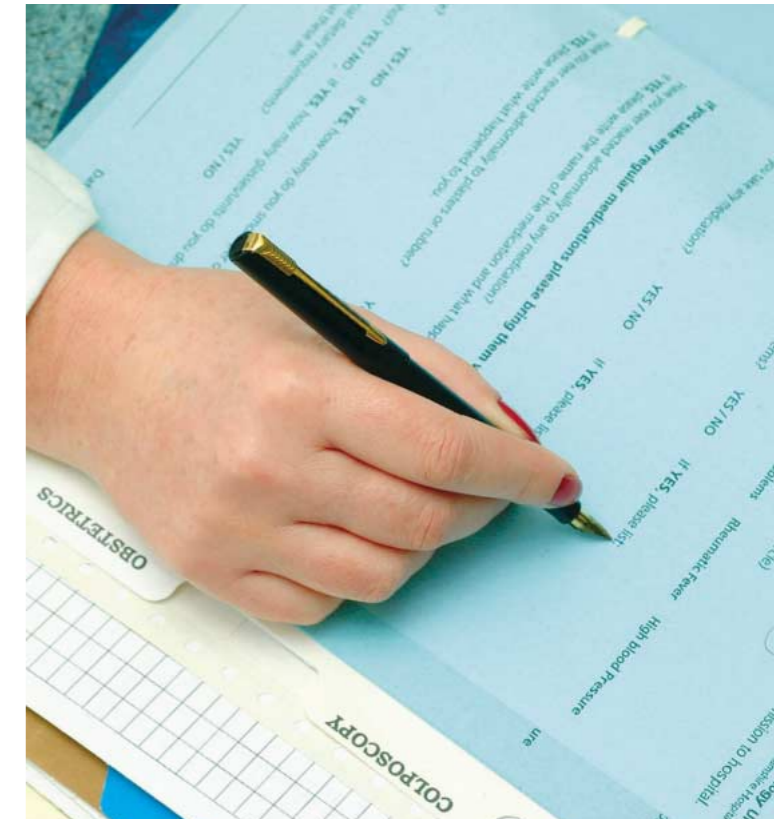
If you would like to know more about how we use your information, how to see your records or how to make a complaint then contact the person in charge of your care or your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). You can ring NHS Direct for further details about PALS on 0845 46 47.

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## Why do you need information about me?

When you see a doctor, nurse or any other health professional, we ask you to give us information about yourself. This helps us decide with you what treatment and care is best for you. We keep a record of any relevant information, which may be written down or held on computer. This is then known as your health or medical record.

Your medical record may include:

- Basic details about you such as name, address and next of kin
- Details of any diagnosis and treatment you receive including drug prescriptions
- Results of investigations you have such as blood tests and X-rays
- Details of contact you have with other health professionals such as visits to clinics
- Relevant information from other professionals and those who care for you

Different health professionals involved in your care will make their own notes, so you may have records in different parts of the NHS.

## Why do you record information about me?

A record of your medical history helps us to:

- Provide proper care for you if we need to see you again
- Provide relevant information to other health professionals if you are referred to another part of the NHS (such as being referred from your GP to a hospital consultant)
- Review the type and quality of care you receive to make sure it is of the highest standard
- Investigate your concerns if you ever need to complain or make a legal claim regarding your treatment

## Is information about me used for anything else?

Sometimes your information will be used within the NHS in ways that can help us run the service.

Information about patients can help us:

- Protect the health of the general public, for example, by assessing trends in illness
- Manage and plan the NHS for everyone's benefit, for example by making sure our services meet future patient needs
- Provide training and teaching for staff

## What about research?

In the NHS we carry out many research projects. If any of our research needs to involve you personally we will ask you if you want to be involved and obtain your consent before going ahead. You do not have to take part - it is entirely your choice. Deciding not to be involved will not affect the care you receive.

Some research involves using information about large groups of people rather than individuals. In this instance your information is anonymised before we use it. This involves removing anything that could identify you such as your name and address. If we want to use information where you can be identified then we will ask your permission to do so.

## How will you ensure information about me remains confidential?

The NHS takes great care to ensure your information remains confidential.

- The handling and sharing of personal information is strictly controlled by law and guidance such as the Data Protection Act 1998
- Each NHS Trust and Social Services Department has a Caldicott Guardian, a senior professional who is responsible for ensuring that your information is handled properly
- Everyone who works for the NHS or in partnership with us has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Breaches of confidentiality by staff are a disciplinary offence
- We only share the minimum amount of information necessary and only with people who have a genuine need to know
- When we use information about you, wherever possible we remove any details that could identify you

