

# Privacy and Your Health Information

## Your Privacy Is Important to All of Us

Most of us feel that our health and medical information is private and should be protected, and we want to know who has this information. Now, Federal law

- Gives you rights over your health information
- Sets rules and limits on who can look at and receive your health information

## Your Health Information Is Protected By Federal Law

Who must follow this law?

- Most doctors, nurses, pharmacies, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, and many other health care providers
- Health insurance companies, HMOs, most employer group health plans
- Certain government programs that pay for health care, such as Medicare and Medicaid.

What information is protected?

- Information your doctors, nurses, and other health care providers put in your medical record
- Conversations your doctor has about your care or treatment with nurses and others
- Information about you in your health insurer's computer system
- Billing information about you at your clinic
- Most other health information about you held by those who must follow this law

## The Law Gives You Rights Over Your Health Information

Providers and health insurers who are required to follow this law must comply with your right to

- Ask to see and get a copy of your health records
- Have corrections added to your health information
- Receive a notice that tells you how your health information may be used and shared
- Decide if you want to give your permission before your health information can be used or shared for certain purposes, such as for marketing
- Get a report on when and why your health information was shared for certain purposes
- If you believe your rights are being denied or your health information isn't being protected, you can
  - File a complaint with your provider or health insurer
  - File a complaint with the U.S. Government

You should get to know these important rights, which help you protect your health information. You can ask your provider or health insurer questions about your rights. You also can learn more about your rights, including how to file a complaint, from the website at [www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/)

# PRIVACY

## For More Information

This is a brief summary of your rights and protections under the federal health information privacy law. You can learn more about health information privacy and your rights in a fact sheet called “Your Health Information Privacy Rights.” You can get this from the website at [www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/).

### Other privacy rights

Another law provides additional privacy protections to patients of alcohol and drug treatment programs. For more information, go to the website at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).

## The Law Sets Rules and Limits on Who Can Look At and Receive Your Information

To make sure that your information is protected in a way that does not interfere with your health care, your information can be used and shared

- For your treatment and care coordination
- To pay doctors and hospitals for your health care and help run their businesses
- With your family, relatives, friends or others you identify who are involved with your health care or your health care object
- To make sure doctors give good care and nursing homes are clean and safe
- To protect the public’s health, such as by reporting when the flu is in your area
- To make required reports to the police, such as reporting gunshot wounds

Your health information cannot be used or shared without your written permission unless this law allows it. For example, without your authorization, your provider generally cannot

- Give your information to your employer
- Use or share your information for marketing or advertising purposes
- Share private notes about your mental health counseling sessions

## The Law Protects the Privacy of Your Health Information

Providers and health insurers who are required to follow this law must keep your information private by

- Teaching the people who work for them how your information may and may not be used and shared
- Taking appropriate and reasonable steps to keep your health information secure

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