

Why we collect information about you

Your doctor, and other health professionals caring for you, keep records about your health, treatment and the care you receive from the National Health Service. They may be written down (manual records), or held on a computer (electronic records). Information is kept because it is an accurate record of your care and treatment. It is there to help you if we need to see you again.

The records may include:

- basic details about you, such as name, address, date of birth, NHS number and next of kin
- contacts we have had with you, such as clinic visits
- notes and reports about your health and any treatment and care you need
- 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 or those who care for you and know you well
- medical photographs to aid diagnosis and to record your treatment

Also, records kept may help the NHS to:

- help us protect the health of the public generally
- see that the NHS runs efficiently
- review the care we provide to ensure it is of the highest standard

- make sure our services can meet patient needs in the future;
- pay our bills (doctors and nurses caring for you)
- account for our actions (in relation to complaints, legal claims or untoward incidents)
- undertake information quality assurance assessments to ensure your information is accurate and up to date
- comply with the law (eg. to notify a birth, to report an infectious disease that may have a serious affect on the general public (but not HIV/AIDS), to comply with a court order)
- help train and educate tomorrow's clinical staff (but you can choose whether or not to be involved personally).
- carry out health research for the benefit of everyone.

How we keep your records confidential and secure

Everyone working for the NHS, or who receives information from us, has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential and secure.

You may be receiving care from other people as well as the NHS*. We may need to share some information about you so we can all work together for your benefit. We will only ever use or pass on information about you if others involved in your care have a genuine need for it.

You have the right to choose whether or not to

let us share information given in confidence, but will need to understand how this might affect our ability to care for you. If you have any concerns you should speak to the health professional responsible for your care (for example, your doctor).

Where information is used for statistical purposes stringent measures are taken to ensure that individual patients cannot be identified. Anonymous statistical information may also be passed to organisations with a legitimate interest, including universities, community safety units and research institutions.

Where it is not possible to use anonymised information, personally identifiable information may be used for essential NHS purposes. These may include research and auditing services. This will only be done with your consent, unless the law requires information to be passed on to improve public health.

*There are strict agreements describing how information can be used by partner organisations. When we pass on any information we will ensure it is kept confidential and secure. Partner organisations include: Strategic Health Authorities, NHS Trusts, Primary Care Trusts, General Practitioners (GPs), Ambulance Services, NHS agencies such as dentists, ophthalmic services etc., Social Services, Education Services, Local Authorities, Voluntary Sector Providers, Private Sector Providers.

How you can get access to your own health records

The Data Protection Act 1998, which came into force on 1 March 2000, allows 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. If you want to see them you should make a request to the NHS organisations where you are being treated.

To request records held at East & North Herts NHS Trust, contact the Medical Records Department (Medico-legal Section) (address and telephone numbers are on the back of this leaflet). They will send you an application form.

You are entitled to receive a copy but should note that a charge will usually be made. You should also be aware that in certain circumstances your right to see some details in your health records may be limited in your own interest or for other reasons.

Who we are

The East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust in conjunction with the patients' forum and the patient information group have compiled this leaflet. In working together in this way, we hope that everyone who uses our services will have clear advice about how we use and safeguard your information.

Further information

Patients who feel they may need the services of an interpreter or a translation to understand how we use their information should contact the ward or department they are attending.

If you would like to know more about how the NHS uses your information and keeps it secure you can find this on the following websites:

Department of Health Website: The 'Confidentiality – NHS Code of practice'
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/Informationpolicy/Patientconfidentialityandcaldicottguardians>

Patient Information Advisory Group (PIAG)
www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk/PIAG/Index.htm

Choose & Book Website
<http://www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/patients/patient> -
Information security

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Lister Hospital Coreys Mill Lane Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 4AB Tel: 01438 314333	QEII Hospital Howlands Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL7 4HQ Tel: 01707 328111
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Mount Vernon Cancer Centre
Rickmansworth Road
Northwood
Middlesex
HA6 2NR
Tel: 01923 826111

Hertford County Hospital
North Road
Hertford
SG14 1LP
Tel: 01707 328111

East and North Hertfordshire 
NHS Trust

Confidentiality of Your Records

Information for Patients

This leaflet explains why information is collected about you and the ways in which this information may be used.

It describes how we safeguard your information.

It also gives you information about how you can get access to your own health records.

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