

# We keep it zipped.

## Our health services for young people are confidential

**WE KEEP IT ZIPPED**



### Who is this fact sheet for?

This fact sheet is for young people aged 12-24. Everyone who works for NSW Health has to respect your privacy. This fact sheet tells you only about how things work in the health service. It does not cover other organisations like your school or social services (for example housing services, Centrelink or law courts etc).

### What is personal health information?

Personal health information is information that identifies you. It can include things like your name, address, and date of birth. This can then be linked to information such as your care and treatment history or results of tests. It may also include information about relationships, pregnancy, contraception, sex, drugs, alcohol, or feeling anxious or depressed.

This information may be kept in paper or electronic medical records. NSW Health has strict rules and policies about storing personal information securely.

### How is my personal health information used by NSW Health?

NSW Health uses your personal health information to make sure you receive the care and treatment you need. This could mean sharing information with others who work in your health service (for example the person who sends you a reminder to attend an appointment) or those outside of the NSW Health service, for example your doctor (GP).

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Your health information will not be shared with your employer, or a staff member from a different type of service (such as your school, or an accommodation or welfare service) without first asking for your permission.

### How does NSW Health keep my personal health information confidential?

- All NSW Health workers have a legal duty to protect the confidentiality of information about you.
- Only relevant information about you is shared within NSW Health or with other organisations involved in your care, safety, welfare or wellbeing. We explain why and how it's shared below.

### When does my information have to be shared with others?

There are specific situations where others need to know about your health and your information may be shared without first asking you first. For example:

- if the doctor or health worker is concerned that you might harm yourself or someone else
- if the doctor or health worker is concerned that you are being harmed or at risk of being harmed by somebody else, or have concerns about your safety, welfare or wellbeing.

If any of these situations happen, the doctor or health worker would have to make sure that you are safe.

### What if my parents or guardian want to see my health records?

Generally, if you are 14 years or over, your parents or guardian cannot see your health records, unless you agree to this.

Your health information will only be shared with a parent, guardian, other family members, friends, or partner if you tell the doctor or health worker that they are your carer or person to contact, or you provide your permission in another way.

If you are under 14, your health information may be shared with your parents or guardian without asking you first. If you are under 14 and do not want your parents or guardian to see your health records or know about your health, you need to first tell the doctor or health worker.

Then, the doctor or health worker decides whether to limit or stop your parents or guardian from having access to your record depending on some factors. This includes whether you are mature enough to understand your health problems and the treatment options. It also includes the reasons for your request to stop your parents or guardian seeing your health record or knowing about your health. You can discuss this with the doctor or health worker.

### Are there other reasons my information may be shared?

Other reasons the doctor or health worker may share your information include:

- to send to My Health Record (see details on page 5)
- to send to your carer to help with your care
- to get feedback on the services you have received
- for reasons relating to organ or tissue donation



- for the management of the NSW health service, such as funding, planning, or to improve the safety and quality of your service
- to investigate a complaint or incident
- to manage a legal claim against the health service
- when the doctor or health worker is required by law to report your vaccinations, diseases (like cancer and infectious diseases) and to provide Medicare details
- to help investigate a serious crime or provide evidence in court
- to conduct approved research projects that will benefit the public.

If you are concerned about your information being shared, please let your doctor or health worker know. They will discuss with you the impact this may have on your health care.

### Can I make decisions and choices about my own health?

Young people are able to see a NSW Health doctor or health worker confidentially and make decisions about their health if the doctor or health worker thinks they are mature enough to fully understand their health problems and the treatment options. There is no fixed age for this, but it is usually about 14 years of age.

Often the doctor or health worker will encourage you to involve your parents or guardian in decisions about your health to provide you with additional help and support if you choose.

### Can I see my own health record?

Yes, you may apply to access your health record held by health services in NSW.

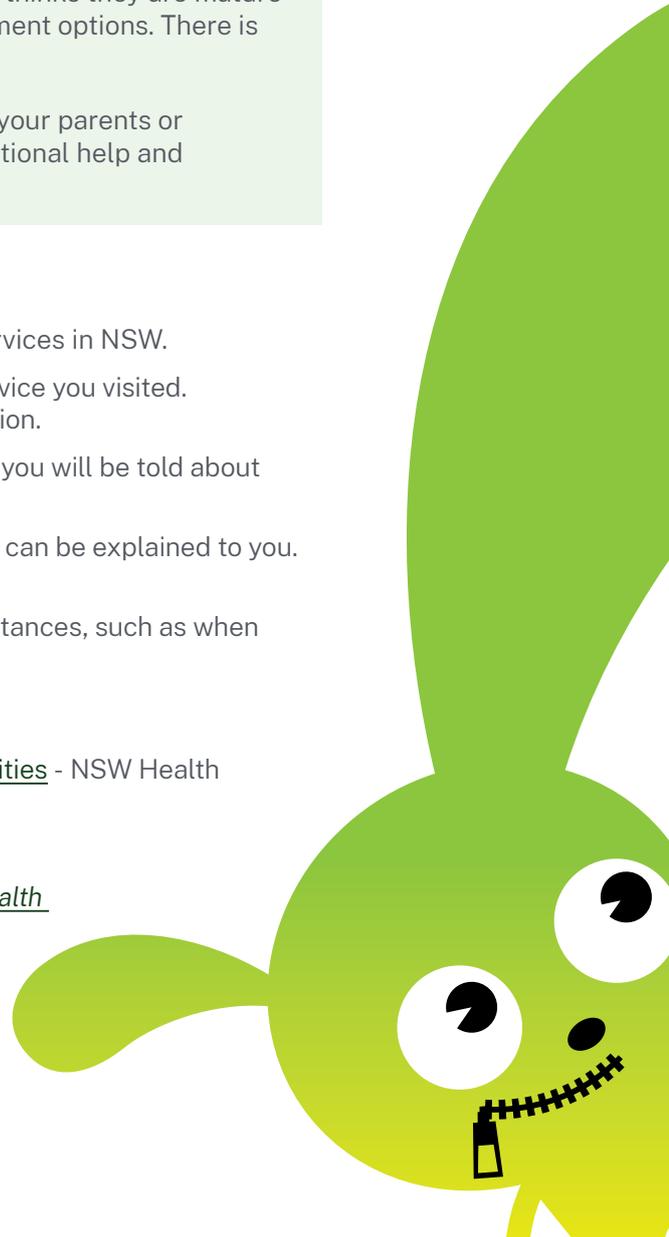
- You will need to apply for a copy of your record at the health service you visited. You will need to fill in an application form and provide identification.
- You may have to pay to receive a copy of your health record, but you will be told about this first.
- Any codes or words you do not understand in your health record can be explained to you. Just ask your health service for assistance.
- Access to your health record may be declined in special circumstances, such as when giving access would put you or another person at risk of harm.

#### For more information on accessing your health record, see:

- [Access to health and medical records held by public health facilities](#) - NSW Health
- [Fact sheet on Accessing your health information in NSW](#) - NSW Information and Privacy Commission (NSW IPC)
- Fact sheet on [How to access your medical records from private health practitioners, such as your GP or specialists](#) - NSW IPC

### Can I ask for changes to be made to my health record?

- If you think that information in your health record is wrong or incomplete, you can request a doctor or health worker to correct it.



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## What are my health rights?

You have the right to:

- see a doctor/health worker that you trust and who respects your opinion
- ask for someone else's opinion
- have your information kept securely and protected against misuse
- ask any questions you like
- get information in words you understand
- ask for an interpreter
- get important information written down for you to take home
- change your mind and stop any treatment (unless the treatment is required by law, eg. some infectious diseases or mental health conditions)
- have a friend or family member with you when seeing the doctor/health worker
- ask about costs, side effects and different choices for treatment
- make a formal complaint about the treatment you received or about how a health service handles your health information.

## What can I do to help my health services?

Health services look after many people and are often very busy places. You can help us by being respectful to the doctors, health workers and other patients. Please let a doctor or health worker know if:

- you cannot get to an appointment or if you are running late
- you stop or change the treatment plan you have agreed on with the doctor or health worker
- you think of something that could be linked to your health such as your use of medicines or drugs
- there is someone you want the doctor or health worker to share (or not share) your information with (for example, you may want your health worker to let a neighbour know that you went to the hospital; or you may not want your partner to know about your health issue)
- you change your name, address or phone number
- you think any information on your health record is incorrect.



## What is the My Health Record?

My Health Record is the Australian Government's digital health system. It keeps all of your health information in one place and you can see it from any computer or device connected to the internet. All Australians have a My Health Record, unless you choose not to have one.

If you have attended a NSW Health service, a summary of your health information will be sent to your My Health Record. NSW Health workers may also view and send information to your My Health Record.

If you are under 14, your parents or guardians manage your record for you. They can look at your record and see health information about you uploaded by your doctor, health worker and Medicare. They can also see your medical tests and medicines, add and remove information, and set extra privacy controls in your record.

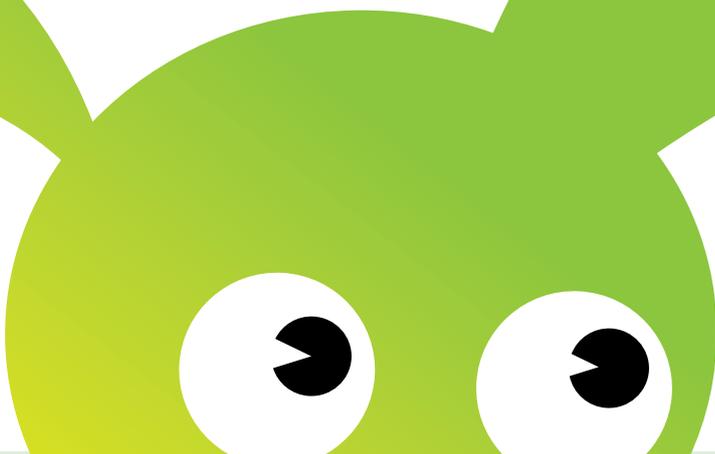
When you turn 14, your parents or guardian will no longer have access to your My Health Record, unless you invite them. This means you have privacy and control over who can see your health information. If you decide you want help from a parent or guardian, you can invite them to access your record as a nominated representative.

If you have a My Health Record, and if you are worried about a particular medical document being uploaded to your record that your parents or guardian might see or for any other reason, let your doctor or health worker know. Tell the doctor or health worker at the beginning of your visit that you do not want those documents uploaded to your My Health Record.

**For further information about My Health Record, telephone 1800 723 471, or go to My Health record for teens; Manage your own record from age 14 (My Health Record).**

### Contact details

If you have any questions about the information in this fact sheet, please speak to a doctor or health worker.



## How can I make a complaint?

If you believe a NSW Health doctor or health worker is not doing the right thing, talk with the doctor or health worker. If you think a doctor or health worker has not respected your privacy, you can make a privacy complaint. If you do not feel comfortable talking to the doctor or health worker, but you still want to do something, ask to speak to their manager or a NSW Health Privacy Contact Officer. You can do this face-to-face, via telephone, or in writing, if it is easier.

Of course, you may also want to tell a manager or a health worker if you believe that they have done a good job.

If you are not happy with the outcome, you can raise your concerns with the:

### Health Care Complaints Commission

- Tel: 02 9219 7444
- Toll free: 1800 043 159 Free from all NSW landline phones - charges may apply from a mobile phone
- Email: [hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au)
- Web: [www.hccc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hccc.nsw.gov.au)
- Or lodge your [complaint online](#)

### NSW Information and Privacy Commission

- Email: [ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au)
- Phone: 1800 472 679
- Web: [www.ipc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au)

## Useful links

- [Lawstuff - Providing free, confidential legal information & help for young people under 25](#)
- [Medicare card application \(from the age of 15\)](#)
- [My health record](#)
- [NSW Health Privacy Leaflet for Patients](#)
- [Your Health Care Rights](#)
- [Youth Friendly General Practice Video Resources](#)



For Confidentiality information for young people scan the QR code.

This factsheet is updated from resources developed by NSW Health in partnership with the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, Sydney Local Health District and 2Connect Youth & Community in 2014.

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