

# We keep it zipped

providing a confidential service for young people

This fact sheet is for young people aged 12-24 to explain that anyone who looks after your health has to keep information about you private. The fact sheet tells you only about how things work in the health service, not other organisations such as your school or social services.

When we talk about parents, we also mean any other person responsible for your care.

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

Young people are able to see a doctor or health worker confidentially and make decisions about their health if the doctor 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 will encourage young people to involve their parent.

## What if my parents want to look at my health records?

If there is something in your health records that you don't want your parents to see, tell a health worker.

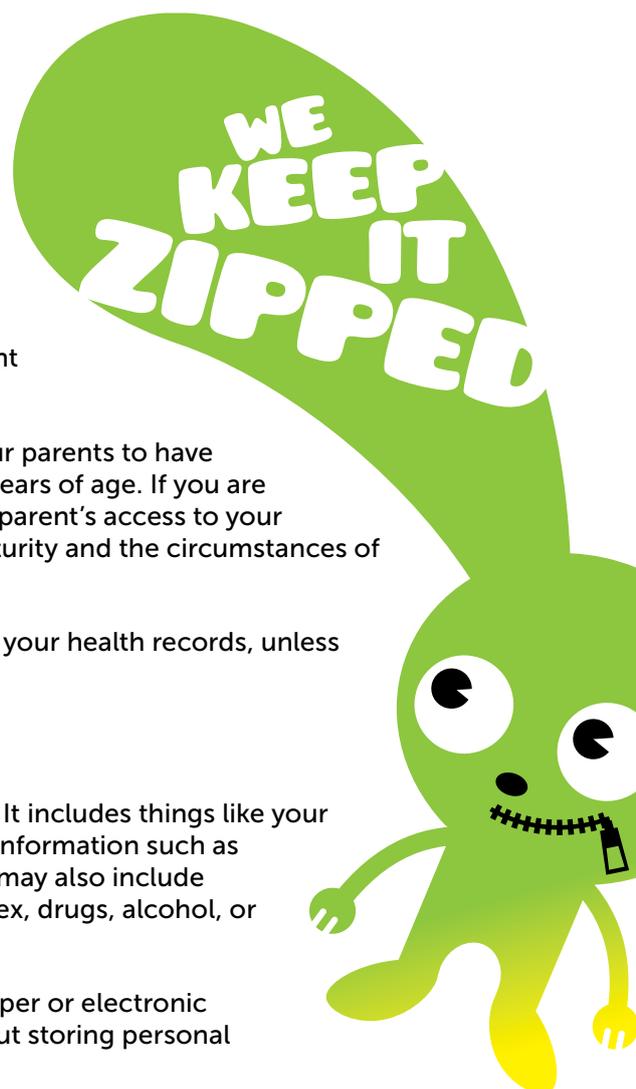
Always make it clear to a health worker if you do not want your parents to have access to your health record, particularly if you are under 14 years of age. If you are under 14 years of age a health service's ability to restrict your parent's access to your record will depend on a number of factors including your maturity and the circumstances of the request. You can discuss this with a health worker.

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

## What is personal health information?

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

This information may be held in a variety of ways including paper or electronic medical records. NSW Health has strict rules and policies about storing personal information securely.



## 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.

## How is my personal health information used?

NSW Health workers use your personal health information to give you the care and treatment you need and to promote your safety, welfare or wellbeing. This could mean sharing information with other health workers who work in your health service such as the person who sends you a reminder to attend an appointment. Your information may also be used for administrative purposes such as:

- \* Payment of bills, or managing complaints or legal claims
- \* To get feedback on the services you have received
- \* To process pathology tests, x-rays and other test results
- \* To pastoral care workers, including hospital chaplains, providing spiritual and pastoral care
- \* For purposes relating to the operation of the NSW health service and treatment of patients, including funding, planning, safety and quality improvement activities.
- \* It could also mean sharing information with a health professional from another health service such as your GP, if you agree to this.

## Are there confidentiality exceptions?

There are a few situations where we might need to talk to other people. For example:

- \* If we are concerned that you might harm yourself or someone else;
- \* If we feel that you are being harmed or at risk of being harm by somebody else, or if we have any concerns about your safety, welfare or wellbeing.

If any of these situations arise we would have to make sure that you are safe.

In most instances, unless you give permission, health workers cannot share your health information. This means that your health information will not be shared with a parent or other family members, your friends or your partner, or your employer, or a staff member from a different type of service (such as your school, or an accommodation or welfare service) but there are other specific situations where others need to be informed, these are explained below.

## What does the law say about other confidentiality exceptions?

Sometimes the law allows your personal health information to be shared, such as:

- \* When State and Commonwealth government agencies require information for statutory reporting purposes, for example to report notifiable diseases such as cancer and infectious diseases, to report births and deaths, 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
- \* To help other health services to prevent a serious threat to someone's life, health or welfare.

If you are concerned about your information being shared, please let your health worker know. They will discuss with you any consequences this may have for your health care.



## Can I see and correct my own health record?

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

- \* Normally you will need to write to the Health Information Service or the manager of the health service you attend to make this request. You will need to provide identification too.
- \* Alternatively, you can contact a health service and request an application form to access your record.
- \* You may have to pay to see your health record, but you will be told about this first.
- \* Any codes or words you don't understand in your health record can be explained to you. Just ask your health service for assistance.
- \* If you think that something in your health record is wrong or incomplete, you can request a health worker to correct it.
- \* Access to your personal information may be declined in special circumstances, such as when giving access would put you or another person at risk of harm.

## 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 private (except where there are safety issues, as discussed previously)
- \* 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.

## What can I do to help NSW Health and other Health Organisations?

You can help us by being respectful to health workers and everyone using the health care service. Please let a health worker know if:

- \* You can't get to an appointment or if you are running late
- \* You stop or change the treatment plan you have agreed on with the health worker
- \* You think of something that could be linked to your health such as the use of any medications or drugs
- \* There is someone you want the health worker to share (or not share) your information with (for example, you may want 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 eHealth record ?

You can get your personal eHealth record by registering yourself on the ehealth website ([www.ehealth.gov.au](http://www.ehealth.gov.au)). Your personally controlled eHealth record is a secure online summary of your health information provided by the Australian Government. It is optional and mainly for your own use. You can access your summary via the eHealth website. You control what goes into it, and who is allowed to access it. Your eHealth record allows you and your doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers to view and share your health information to provide you with the best possible care.

## Contact details

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

## How can I make a complaint?

If you believe that a NSW Health worker is not doing the right thing by you, discuss this with the health worker. If you don't feel ok talking to the health worker, but you still want to do something, ask to speak to their manager. You can do this face-to-face, via telephone, or in writing if it's easier.

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

If you are still not happy with the outcome you may contact:

### 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)

## Useful links

[eHealth record](#)

[Lawstuff –know your rights](#)

[How to get your own Medicare card from the age of 15 roadmap and fact sheet](#)

[Medicare card application \(from the age of 15\)](#)

[NSW Health Privacy Leaflet for Patients](#)

[Youth Friendly General Practice video resource](#)

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[www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

SHPN: (HSP) 170105

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