

Your Personal Health Information

Frequently Asked Questions

What is personal health information?

There are two types of health information: personal and general.

- Your personal health information is the information contained in your health records at your doctor's office, at the health centre or held by the territorial government. Your name or your Health Card Plan number is part of your personal health information.
- General health information is information that cannot be traced back to you and is kept in computer databases for statistical information.

Why would I want to access my personal health information?

You might want, for example:

- To learn more about your health history and treatments;
- To get information for life and health insurance purposes;
- To prepare for a legal claim; or,
- To make a complaint against a health professional.

Do I have a right to all my personal health information?

Yes, you have the right to access your personal information held by your doctor, the health centre or the territorial government. There are times when some information will not be released, such as when a person is felt to be in a fragile mental state.

How do I access my personal health information?

You can access your personal health information in several ways:

- By contacting the clinic or hospital where you received treatment and care.
- By consulting with your health care provider such as your doctor or nurse.
- By contacting the Access and Privacy Coordinator with the Department of Health and Social Services.

Can I get a copy of my personal health information?

Yes. Not only are you allowed to see your personal health information, you have the right to receive a copy of it.

Is there a cost?

Usually there is no cost for copies of your personal health information. Sometimes, there may be some administrative costs for a large request.

What if my recorded personal health information is incorrect and how do I have it corrected?

If you feel your personal health information is incorrect, talk to your doctor or health care provider. Ask to have the incorrect information changed.

If there is a disagreement between you and the health care provider about your recorded personal health information, you can contact the Access and Privacy Coordinator at the Department of Health and Social Services or a your regional health and social services board.

What if someone I know works at a health care facility that I've been to? Can he/she access my file?

Your privacy is protected by strict rules about how information is collected, used and disclosed. These rules apply to all personal health information within the NWT Health and Social Services system.

Only those employees who need information to perform their work duties have access to your personal health information. All employees sign an agreement promising to protect confidentiality.

What about my Health Card Plan number?

Your Health Card Plan number is protected like any other personal health information. Anyone can ask for your health card number, but you do not have to give your it to anyone other than a health care provider.

Does just anyone have a right to collect my health information?

No. When gathering your health information, doctors, hospitals, and government agencies must:

- Have a legitimate reason for collecting it;
- Tell you why it's needed;
- Collect only as much information as is required for the stated purpose; and
- Get the information from you directly whenever possible.

Are there any circumstances where my personal health information could be used or disclosed without my consent?

Yes. While the general rule is that the Department of Health and Social Services and the boards must get your permission before using or disclosing your personal health information, there are some exceptions. For example, personal health information may be given without your permission in order to prevent or lessen a threat to your mental or physical health, or public health and safety.

All personal health information released must follow strict guidelines set by federal and territorial legislation, and no information is released for commercial purposes.

What is my personal health information used for?

Information collected by the Department of Health and Social Services and the boards is used mainly to manage the NWT health and social service system.

Health and social data is used to:

- Track the development of disease or illness.
- Prevent spreading of disease or illness.
- Control outbreaks of disease and illness.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.
- Build a healthier, happier, more productive population.

How are those people who record my information required to protect my personal health information?

All employees of the Department of Health and Social Services and the boards have a legal obligation under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, to protect the privacy and security of all personal information in their possession.

What if I believe that my rights to privacy and access have been violated?

Contact: Access and Privacy Coordinator
Department of Health and Social Services
Government of the Northwest Territories
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2L9
Tel: (867) 873-7152

Or your health and social services board:

Deh Cho Health and Social Services Board
Box 246
Fort Smith, NT. X0E 0N0
Tel: (867) 695-3815

Dogrib Community Services Board
Bag 5
Rae – Edzo, NT. X0E 0Y0
Tel: (867) 392-3000

Fort Smith Health and Social Services Board
Box 1080
Fort Smith, NT. X0E 0P0
Tel: (867) 872-6200

Hay River Community Health Board
#3 Gaetz Drive
Hay River, NT. X0E 0R8
Tel: (867) 874-7115

Inuvik Regional Health and Social Services Board
Bag Service #2
Inuvik, NT. X0E 0T0
Tel: (867) 777-8146

Stanton Regional Health Board
Box 10
Yellowknife, NT. X1A 2N1
Tel: (867) 669-4224

Yellowknife Health and Social Services Board
Box 608
Yellowknife, NT. X1A 2N5
Tel: (867) 873-7276

