

Accessing records

Accessing your medical records: requesting access to health information

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Accessing your medical records: requesting access to health information

You have the right to request access to and receive copies of your health information.

Health Information is protected by legislation. In Victoria, *the Victorian Health Records Act 2001* and the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1998*, help protect the health information of individuals that is held in the public sector and the private sector.

Health service providers may take up to 45 days to respond to your request.

Under some circumstances, health service providers may refuse to give you access to your health information. If they do this, they must clearly explain why.

There may be fees for requesting health information at some services.

You may also be able to ask your health practitioner directly (for example your GP, specialist etc.) for a copy of your health information. If they provide you with a copy of your health information, you may also request that they explain any results or terminology that you are not familiar with.

Health information can be confronting, and uses a lot of medical terminology, as it is designed for communication between medical professionals.

Consider having a support person with you when you receive your health information, or making the time to go through your health information with a health practitioner who can answer your questions, concerns and explain terminology.

What to ask for when requesting health information from a GP or Specialist:

When asking for a copy of your health information from a GP or specialist practice, you may want to consider making the request in writing (for example, via email or letter) to ensure that you are asking for everything that you need at once, and that there is a record of your request.

Here is some text that you might like to use in a letter or email:

I am requesting access to a complete copy of my medical record held by your practice under the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

*This request includes **[add bullet points from below]** and any other records relating to my care, whether electronic or paper.*

*Please provide all records held/records from **[date]** to present, preferably in electronic PDF format via secure email.*

(Note: sometimes people only want records for a specific period of time).

Before you process this request, please let me know if there are any reasonable administrative fees associated with this request.

Please let me know if you require identification to process this request.

You may need to provide your full name, date of birth, address, contact details and matching identification (such as a driver's licence) to the health service provider, when requesting access to your health information.

The types of records that you may ask for could include any of the following:

- Consultation and progress notes;
- Referral letters (sent and received);
- Specialist correspondence ;
- Pathology and imaging results (both written and images);
- Medication and prescription history;
- Care plans and management plans;

- Mental health care plans (if applicable);
- Immunisation records;
- Hospital discharge summaries (applicable if a hospital admission);
- Any electronic or scanned documents, attachments or administrative notes associated with your health records.

What to ask for when requesting health information from a hospital

Some hospitals have specific forms that they will ask you to complete when you request access to your health information. Check the hospital's website, or contact the hospital via email or phone to obtain information about the process for requesting your health information.

Here is some text that might be helpful in forms, letters or emails requesting your medical records:

*I am writing to request access to my full hospital medical record under the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic). Please provide copies of all records relating to my care at **[hospital name]**, including but not limited to:*

[add list from bullet points below]

*This request relates to my care at the hospital **[all records held/records during the period admission dates/to present]**.*

(Note: sometimes people only want records for a specific period of time).

Please provide the records, preferably in electronic PDF format via secure email.

Before you process this request, please advise me of any reasonable administrative fees payable and any identification requirements.

You may need to provide your full name, date of birth, address, contact details and matching identification (such as a driver's licence) to the hospital, when requesting access to your health information.

The types of records that you may ask for could include any of the following:

- Admission and discharge records;
- Emergency department records;
- Inpatient and outpatient clinical notes;
- Nursing and progress notes;
- Operative reports and procedure notes;
- Pathology and diagnostic imaging reports;
- Specialist and treating team correspondence;
- Medication charts and treatment records;
- Consent forms;
- Allied health reports;
- Any other clinical documentation relating to your treatment.

Complaints about access to health information

If you have a complaint about access to your health information, or the amendment, addition or deletion of your health information, you can:

- Contact the health service provider, the health service provider's records manager or their Freedom of Information officer to make a complaint; or
- Submit a complaint to the Health Complaints Commissioner (HCC) about:
 - your inability to access your health information;
 - a request that your health information be amended or deleted and/or
 - missing or mishandled health information.