

How to Access Medical Records

A guide on how to apply for medical records

Expert advice

A health record is any record, whether on computer or paper, which includes information about your physical or mental health or condition and is made by, or for, a health professional involved in your care. They can also include your case notes, letters to and from other health professionals, x-rays, results from laboratory tests and scans.

As you're entitled to view your own health records, this guide is designed to assist with your application.

Who can apply for medical records?

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to see your personal health records. You can only be prevented from seeing them if the healthcare professional believes they may cause serious physical or mental harm, they could identify someone else, or they're legally sensitive.

You can also apply to see someone else's medical records if they've given you written consent, you have parental responsibility, or if you have Power of Attorney.

An application can also be made to see the medical records of someone who has died. This application must be made by the personal representative, executor or administrator of the person who has died. Someone making a claim for compensation on behalf of the person who has died can also make the application. A third party, such as a lawyer, can only access medical records if the person entitled to access provides their written consent.

How do you apply?

To obtain copies of your medical records, you should write to the person who holds them, i.e. your GP or the NHS Trust responsible for your care.

When writing you should make it clear that you want to receive copies of your records or you may simply be invited to look through them with a healthcare professional.

You may be asked for proof of your identity or to complete an application form, but you don't have to give a reason for wanting to see them.

If you're applying to see the medical records of someone else, you need to include the patient's name, address, date of birth and hospital number, if known, to enable the correct records to be identified. You'll also need to provide details of your relationship and any form of consent or supporting documentation.



How long does it take?

Once you've given enough information to allow the records to be identified and located, and you've paid the fee, the healthcare provider should provide copies within 40 days.

What is the cost of obtaining copies of medical records?

If you request copies of the medical records of someone who is still living, each service provider can charge a maximum of £50.

If you also want copies of x-rays or scans, you may be charged a further fee as these are expensive to copy.

If you request copies of the medical records of someone who has died, if the health records have not been updated in the 40 days prior to your application, a fee of £10 may be charged from each service provider.

Additional fees may be incurred for copying and postage and there is no limit on this charge.

Therefore, please ensure you know the full amount you will be charged prior to obtaining any records.