

GETTING ACCESS TO YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS

If you want to view your health records, you may not need to make a formal application. Nothing in the law prevents healthcare professionals from informally showing you your own records. You can make an informal request during a consultation or by phoning your GP surgery or hospital to arrange a time to see them. Copies of records are supplied only if a formal application for access to the records has been made.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you have a legal right to apply for access to health information held about you. This includes your NHS or private health records held by a GP, optician or dentist, or by a hospital.

If you want to see your health records, you don't have to give a reason.

Applying for access to your health records

Depending on which health records you want to see, submit your request in writing or by email to a registered health professional such as:

- your GP surgery
- your optician
- your dentist
- the hospital trust's health records manager or patient services manager

The health records manager, GP or other healthcare professional will decide whether your request can be approved. They can sometimes refuse to disclose information if, for example the information you have asked for contains information that relates to another person.

Under the Data Protection Act, requests for access to records should be met within 40 days. However, government guidance for healthcare organisations says they should aim to respond within 21 days.

Fees to access your health records

You may have to pay a fee to access your health records, so ask if there is a charge before you apply to see them.

If you want to see your health records but don't want a copy, the maximum fee that can be charged is £10. If the health records have been added to in the last 40 days, there is no charge.

The fee to obtain a permanent copy of your health records will vary depending on how the information is stored. The maximum fees are:

- £10 for records held only on a computer
- £50 for records that are only held manually
- £50 for records that are held partly on a computer and partly manually