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How to Access your Medical Records

Informal Request: 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.

Formal Request: Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you have a legal right to apply for access to health information held about you. They can sometimes refuse to disclose information if, for example the information you have asked for contains information that relates to another person. 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.

Application: Depending on which health records you want to see, submit your request in writing or by email to a registered health professional, for example, your dentist, your optician, your G.P. This is known as a Subject Access Request (SAR).

It's a good idea to state the dates of the records when you apply.

The health records manager, GP or other healthcare professional will decide whether your request can be approved.

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.

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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. In some cases there may be a multiple charge to access different sets of health records.

Can someone else access my health records?

Another person can only access your health records if you authorise them to do so, for example, if you are acting as somebody's Lasting Power of Attorney.

Further information and advice

Bolton Foundation Trust Medical Legal Department, 9am – 4pm

Trust Headquarters
Royal Bolton Hospital
Minerva Road
Farnworth
Bolton
BL4 0JR
Tel: 01204 390361

Website link - <http://www.boltonft.nhs.uk/about-us/freedom-of-information/access-to-your-health-records/>

Department of Health:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/en/Managingyourorganisation/Informationpolicy/Patientconfidentialityandcaldicottguardians/DH_4084411

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Royal College of General Practitioners

NHS Choices – <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/pages/1309.aspx?categoryid=68>

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