

## Storing Your Own Personal Health Records

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There is quite a buzz these days about the idea of individuals storing their own personal health records. The interest has been fueled by the ravaging storms that hit the South in the last few years when thousands of people completely lost their medical records due to destruction or relocation. Not having medical information when you need it is also a common problem when emergencies occur. Adults end up in the emergency room and can't remember or are unable to recite relevant health data, the medications they are taking, or which physician they saw for an illness. The problem of inadequate health information is compounded when the individual has one (or more) chronic illness and sees several physicians. The result annually is thousands of missed diagnoses and life threatening drug errors.

Several websites now exist that allow you to *personally* enter your own health information into "secure" sites; let the buyer beware. Some of the sites are free and some charge a fee. Just go to a search engine and enter, "personal health record." Several sites will be displayed. You can also go to [www.myphr.com](http://www.myphr.com) sponsored by the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA). AHIMA lists several sites you can investigate that offer both Internet and paper formats for storage. They also offer free health record forms you can use to begin to set up your health information database.

The disadvantage of the present websites is that it is very difficult to upload information because there is no one digital format in use, so the data formats may be incompatible – rather like documents created on the old Apple vs. IBM PC. So, information stored in various medical providers' servers may not be compatible with the data formats used by the websites. This leads to sites relying on the user (that's you!) to enter the information and may prevent the user from sharing the information with health care providers.

According to Catherine Rampell of the Washington Post, studies estimate that approximately 90% of physician practices and 80% of hospitals still use *paper* records.<sup>1</sup> Despite this fact, several large companies like Microsoft, Google, and WebMD have already or are about to launch online "health portals" that will allow individuals to store personal medical information in secure vaults and determine who should have access to them. There is also growing interest at the national level to establish a single format that would be used by all providers so that information could be exchanged quickly and easily. Naturally that has raised concerns about privacy. Congress has already asked the Government Accounting Office to evaluate protection issues with a national electronic health information database.<sup>2</sup>

Until uniformity happens, it is still a very good idea for individuals to begin their own health record database. If you have not begun the process, here are some general types of information you will want to include:

- Personal – name, address, phone(s), contacts, date of birth, height, weight
- Emergency contacts
- Physician Contacts
- Insurance Information
- Advance Directives/Living Wills/Power of Attorney/Donor Authorizations
- Family Health History
- Personal Medical History (Immunizations; surgeries; hospitalizations; allergies; prostheses)
- Infectious Diseases
- Current medical conditions (Lab, imaging and test results)
- Current medications
- Lifestyle, diet, and health promotion
- Vision and dental
- Ongoing Health Log (Cholesterol, blood pressure)
- Correspondence



If the list seems overwhelming, start slowly and consider using the nurse in your primary care doctor's office as a consultant. S/he can help you get started and teach you how to request information from various providers. *GRISWOLD SPECIAL CARE* has a basic recording paper system that is attached to help get you started. If you find that your loved one could use some assistance, call [an office near you](#) to inquire about services. And last but not least, inform *everyone* in the family where the information is located and if possible, keep it portable on an external (thumb) drive.

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<sup>1</sup> Rampell, C. (2007) Your Health Data, Plugged In To The Web. Retrieved January 3, 2008 from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/04/AR2007100400984.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Nelson, R. (2007) The Personal Health Record: Digital Information Is Easy To Access, But Is It Secure? *American Journal of Nursing*. 107:9, 27-28.



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**HEALTH INFORMATION SHEET**

(Last Updated: \_\_\_\_\_)

1. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_
2. HOME ADDRESS & PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. LAST 4 DIGITS OF SS# \_\_\_\_\_ 4. DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_
5. ALLERGIES: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
6. PRIMARY CONTACT: (NAME, RELATIONSHIP & PHONE #) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
7. PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER & PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
8. OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER, SPECIALIST & PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
9. HEALTH CARE INSURANCE CARRIER & NUMBERS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
10. BASIC MEDICAL HISTORY:  DIABETIC  HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE  HEART DISEASE  STROKE  
 MS  ALS  OSTEOPOROSIS  ALZHEIMERS/DEMENTIA  PARALYSIS, SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 EASY BRUIASIBILITY  HISTORY OF FALLS  CANCER, SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 INFECTIOUS DISEASES, SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SURGERIES, SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_

11. CURRENT MEDICATIONS:

NAME	DOSE	FREQUENCY

(CONTINUE ON THE BACK)

12. DIETARY INFORMATION:  REGULAR  CHOPPED/PUREED  LIQUIDS  LOW SALT  DIABETIC  TUBE FEED  
 KOSHER  OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_
13. GENERAL INFORMATION: (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):  
 HAS ADVANCE DIRECTIVE/LIVING WILL  HAS DNR  POA/GUARDIAN  DONOR AUTHORIZATIONS  
 SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FULLY ORIENTED  OCCASIONALLY CONFUSED  RARELY ORIENTED  NEVER ORIENTED  COMBATIVE  
 COMATOSE  CONTINENT OF URINE  CONTINENT OF STOOL  OSTOMY  URINARY CATHETER  
 USES ADULT BRIEFS  FULLY AMBULATORY  WHEELCHAIR  CRUTCHES, CANE OR WALKER  BEDBOUND  
 BLIND  DEAF  UNABLE TO SPEAK  ARTIFICIAL LIMB(S) \_\_\_\_\_ (SPECIFY)  
 SPEAKS (CIRCLE) ENGLISH, SPANISH, GERMAN, FRENCH, RUSSIAN, \_\_\_\_\_ (SPECIFY)  
 HEARING AID  PACEMAKER  DENTURES  CONTACTS  EYEGLASSES  PROSTHESES \_\_\_\_\_

*More Information?* CONTINUE ON THE REVERSE SIDE