



Saving Your Medical Records

Keeping copies of your medical records is always a good idea. It is even more important if you have cancer.

Why should I keep copies of my medical records?

Each health care provider you see will need to know about your cancer and treatment. Giving your health care providers copies of your medical records can help them get correct information.

It's best to get copies of your medical records during or soon after treatment. It can get harder to get your medical records after a few years.

Sometimes it's hard to get copies of your medical records before you finish treatment. That's OK. The next health care provider you see can request them.

How can I get copies of my medical records?

Hospitals, clinics, and doctor's offices must help you get to your medical records. This is required by law.

One way to get your records is through electronic health records (EHRs). EHRs let you log into a website – often called a patient portal – to see and sometimes be able to print your records. To find out if you have this option, ask your cancer care team.

If you aren't able to get your medical records through a patient portal, you can ask your doctor for copies of your

records. You will need to fill out a request form or send a letter. And there may be a charge for copies. Ask your cancer care team for help with this.

What records should I keep?

If you've been treated for cancer, try to get copies of the records listed below.

- Pathology reports with results of tests done on your cancer
- Imaging test results (CT or MRI scans, etc.)
- The operation report(s) if you had surgery
- Discharge summaries from hospital stays
- A treatment summary if you had chemo or other medicines to treat your cancer, including doses and how long you took them
- A treatment summary if you had radiation therapy
- A list of any treatment side effects you had, including whether they continued after treatment
- Contact information for the doctors who treated your cancer
- A survivorship care plan if you are done with treatment. This describes your cancer, the treatments you got, and follow-up that might be needed.

It is also helpful to keep current lists of:

- Other health or medical problems you have
- All medicines, vitamins, and supplements you take, including the dose and how often you take them
- Vaccines you've gotten
- Test results related to your health history, such as glucose and A1C for diabetes or EKG for heart problems

How or where should I keep copies of my medical records?

Some people like to keep printed copies of their medical records. Other people like to keep their medical records on their computer, tablet, or phone. And some people like to use their patient portal or websites for personal health records (PHRs).

But remember these records have private information about you – often called personal health information (PHI). So, no matter how you store your medical records, be sure that they are kept safe and secure.



For cancer information and answers, visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.



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