



# **Viewing my Electronic Medical Record Patient Information Leaflet**



## **Introduction**

There can be great benefits from accessing your electronic medical record online. But, your record contains personal and sometimes sensitive information, so it is important to keep them safe. You should take the same care with your health record as you do if you use online banking.

## **What is the minimum age to start using online services?**

Whilst there is no official minimum age limit for using online service, the Practice has set an age of 16 years.

The Practice is mindful of the benefits for parents/guardians to have online access for children however with the introduction of Detailed Coded Records (DCR) this is no longer available due to the limited functionality of our medical information system. However, if a child has a severe learning disability and it would be in the child's best interests for the parent/guardian to have access they may do so but they would need to request this in writing.

## **What's in it for you?**

- You can look at your records whenever you choose to, without needing to print them. Online records are up to date and more secure than a printed paper record which could get lost or seen by others.
- People who have long term conditions, for example diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease etc. have found looking at their test results online helps them to make positive changes to improve their health.
- You can look at your medical record before your appointment to see if there is anything you need to discuss with the clinician. This could be your test results, illnesses you have had in the past or any new information added to your records. This would help you discuss any concerns you may have and help you benefit more from your appointment.
- You can make sure your medical information is accurate, for example you can let the surgery know if you have an allergy to a medicine that is not recorded.
- Before you go on holiday you can check if your vaccinations are up to date without having to contact the surgery.

## **Share your records safely, or not at all**

One of the benefits of using online records is that you can share them with family members or carers. However, sharing your record is something to think carefully about. Your record may contain sensitive and personal information that you don't want other people to see. Another thing to consider is that anyone that you share your record with could keep a copy.

- Before you share your record with anyone, consider whether it's in your best interests and what they might do with the information, now or in the future. If you are in doubt do not share.
- If someone is trying to force you to share your record, please tell us.

## **Understanding your records**

Your medical record is designed to be used by clinical professionals to ensure that you receive the best possible care. Some of the information within your medical record may be highly technical, written by specialists and not easily understood. If you find anything difficult to understand, as well as talking to the doctor or nurse you can go to the NHS Choices website, [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). NHS Choices is the NHS website so you can look for information on illnesses, improving health and to find NHS services in your local area.

### **Test Results**

Patients should note that data is quite often flagged as abnormal by the laboratory because the biological value is outside the lab 'normal' range but is no significance to the patient.

- Tests are carried out for different reasons and the meaning of the result may depend upon the circumstances of the test: diagnosis, monitoring, risk-stratification and screening. A result may be abnormal when used to make a diagnosis but acceptable for monitoring purposes, or vice versa.
- Reference intervals vary from laboratory to laboratory and may not allow for individual differences in age, gender and ethnicity. Generally 5% of the healthy population has a test that is outside the reference range.
- The predictive value of a test may vary depending upon the population. A test result may not distinguish between healthy people and those with disease. A false positive or false negative may be upsetting or inappropriately reassuring for the patient.
- Monitoring tests may vary with time quite normally therefore patients may find it difficult to decide whether a change in level is normal.
- Risk stratification is often based on several factors so for example two people with the same high total cholesterol may have very different cardiovascular risks.
- Screening tests are recommened on a set of criteria, including the predictive value of the test and the benefit of early recognition. Some tumor markers are useful in monitoring disease but not making a diagnosis.
- Free text added to test results may not be displayed in Patient Online, such free text often adds more meaning to the test result.

Other websites frequently used to search for information on illnesses and test results are Patient, [www.patient.info](http://www.patient.info) and Lab Tests Online UK, [www.labtestsonline.org.uk](http://www.labtestsonline.org.uk). Although these websites are not owned or checked by the NHS, patients do find them useful.

### **A few things to think about**

There are a few things you need to think about before registering for online records.

- A suitably qualified member of the practice team will have checked the medical record that is available to the patient. Any potentially harmful and confidential third party data will have been redacted before you have been given access to the rest of the coded data within your medical record.
- The information that you can see online may be misleading if you rely on it alone to complete insurance, employment or legal report forms.

On very rare occasions:

- Your GP may not think it is in your best interest for you to look at your records online. If this happens, the GP will discuss their reasons with you. It is up to the GP to decide if you should be allowed access to your online records.

- You may see your test results before the clinician has spoken to you about them. This may be when you cannot contact the surgery, or when the surgery is closed. This means you will need to wait until an appointment is available to talk to a clinician.
- Information in your medical record may need correcting. If you find something that is not correct, you should contact the surgery. The staff will be able to answer your questions and set things right when needed. Please bear in mind that you cannot change the records yourself.
- There may be information in your medical record that you did not know was there or that you had forgotten about, such as an illness or an upsetting incident. If you see anything that you did not know about that worries you, please speak to the surgery and we will discuss this with you.
- If you see someone else's information in your record, please log out immediately and let the surgery know as soon as possible.

### **Keeping your username and password safe**

When you have registered for Patient Online services, the Practice will give you a username and password, which you will use to log in. You should not share your login details with others.

To protect your information from other people:

- You should keep your password secret and it is best not to write it down. If you must write it down, keep a reminder of the password, not the password itself. This should be kept in a secure place.
- If you think someone has seen your password, you should change it as soon as possible. You may want to contact the surgery if you are not able to change it right away, for example when you do not have access to the internet.
- You should not share your username or password. No one should force you to show them your login details, you have the right to say no. If someone forces you, tell the surgery as soon as possible

**The Practice has the right to remove online access services. This is rarely necessary but may be the best option if you do not use them responsibly or if there is evidence that access may be harmful to you. This may occur if someone is forcing you to give them access to your record or if the record may contain something that may be upsetting or harmful to you. The Practice will explain the reasons for withdrawing access to you and will re-instate access as quickly as possible if appropriate.**