

Privacy of Your Personal Health Information

Information from your Doctor

We take the privacy of your personal information very seriously. Here are details about a provincial law that protects your personal information.

The Personal Information Protection Act, SBC 2003, c. 63 (PIPA), which came into force on January 1, 2004, sets out rules about how doctors collect personal information on their patients, use it to provide medical care, and disclose it to others (such as labs, other doctors, hospitals, and so on) for your care. PIPA also allows you to get access to your own information and correct it if necessary. Since doctors have always used common sense to protect their patients, you will notice very little difference in how we treat your personal information.

What is Different under PIPA

PIPA means that there are now rules about:

- How personal information must be collected, stored, protected, and destroyed
- Why we may collect it from you
- Who we can disclose it to
- How you can get access to your information and correct it

Under PIPA there is a difference between identifiable and non-identifiable information. Identifiable information tells who a person is—non-identifiable information does not. This is a simple but important distinction, because privacy can be violated only if the person can be identified. For that reason, PIPA is mainly concerned with information that can directly identify you.

Consent

When you provide information to your doctor regarding your health, you have given your implicit consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of that information so your doctor can provide appropriate care. You have implicitly consented to the doctor using this information and sending all or part of it to others, such as a lab, hospital, other physician as necessary to give you direct medical care.

Right to Access your Personal Information

As a patient, you have the right to request access to your medical records with us, but do not necessarily have access to everything in your file. PIPA allows doctors to hold back information if it could cause harm to the patient or to others. The office's privacy officer will help you fill out the required form to seek access

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to your records and will explain the process. The privacy officer will also talk to you about the fee for accessing your records.

Right to Correct Errors or Omissions

If you believe there is an error or omission in your records held in our office, you can request a correction. Our privacy officer will help you fill out the required form and explain the process. Within 30 days receiving your request, we will correct any information in your record that has been verified to be inaccurate. Our office will then send a copy of the corrected patient record to each organization that got the incorrect or incomplete information from us in the past year. If we decide that no incorrect information exists in your record, we will make a note of the change you asked for and include it in your record to indicate a correction was requested but not made. We will also notify you and provide you with the reasons for not making the requested correction.

Complaint process

If you have a complaint or concern about how your personal information has been collected, used, or disclosed, there is a process in place to deal with it. You have the right to make a written complaint to your doctor's office. Ideally, dealing directly with the privacy officer in our office should solve the problem, and he or she will try to resolve the matter with you.

The privacy officer will investigate and respond to all complaints within a reasonable time period. If the complaint is found to be justified, appropriate steps will be taken to resolve the complaint including, if necessary, amending office policies and procedures about personal information.

If the doctor's office has not dealt with your concern to your satisfaction, you can contact the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and speak with their privacy officer to help solve the issue. If you are still not satisfied, you can contact the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC, who has the final word on the matter. Our privacy officer will provide you with the necessary contact information and the procedure to follow should you require it.

For more information

If you have questions about how personal information is gathered, used, or disclosed by this office, please contact our privacy officer.