



Step 5 – Limit Use, Disclosure, Storage and Retention

A practice must use and disclose personal information in accordance with the purposes for collection. Consent is required for use and disclosure of personal information for new purposes, unless it is otherwise authorized by PIPA. Information should be kept only for as long as necessary to meet the original purposes or as required by the bylaws of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. The bylaws currently require that medical records be retained for at least 16 years from the date of last entry or from the age of majority. Records containing personal information (whether paper or electronic) should be disposed of appropriately, safely, and definitively when they are no longer required. For more information, see [Guidelines for Secure Destruction of Personal Health Information](#) and [Guidelines for Protecting Medical Records When Leaving a Practice](#).

If the personal information of British Columbians is stored or accessed outside of Canada, there is a risk that other jurisdictions will not offer the same (or any) legal privacy protections for that data. While PIPA does not prohibit storage and access to personal information from outside Canada, it is recommended that physicians avoid storing personal information outside of Canada and prohibit access to such records from outside Canada without express patient consent. This includes using cloud-based software where data may be stored outside Canada.