



Responding to Patient Requests to Access Personal Information

This section will:

- Explain patients' rights about accessing their personal information held in a physician's office.
- Identify the parameters that apply to how a physician responds to such a request, including timelines, exceptions, and applicable fees.

Under the BC Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), patients (or the patient's legally authorized representative) are entitled to access their personal information in the control of a physician's office, to ensure its accuracy and completeness, to understand how their information has been used, and to identify the names and the organizations to which their personal information was disclosed.

A patient must make a request for access to personal information in writing, and the physician's office must respond within 30 working days of receiving a request. (See the [Patient Request Form for Access to Personal Information](#).) The response may be a copy of the information or, in the case where copies cannot be made, arrangements must be made for the patient to review the original records.

A physician office may charge a reasonable fee for such access. Where a fee is charged, a written estimate must be provided to the patient, which may request that a deposit for all or part of the fee be paid before the service is provided.

There are some exceptions in which personal information may not or must not be released to a patient. For example, personal information that is protected by client-solicitor privilege or that would reveal confidential business proprietary information is not required to be disclosed. Further, information must not be disclosed in certain situations where doing so may result in harm to a patient or someone else, or if the personal information is about someone else. If access is refused, the appointed Privacy Officer or delegate must explain to the patient the reasons why.

The designated Privacy Officer must educate staff on the appropriately response to such requests. A patient may request a review of a response that he or she is not satisfied with **within 30 working days**, by going back to the physician's office. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the patient may ask the



College of Physicians and Surgeons to resolve the matter. A patient may also escalate the complaint to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC (OIPC) at www.oipc.bc.ca.