

Health Information and Your Privacy in Heartland Health Region

The Heartland Health Region (HHR) understands that your health information is a very personal and private matter. We are committed to keeping it confidential and secure.

The HHR collects personal health information about you for the primary purpose of providing the health care services you need or ask for.

In addition, the personal health information we collect will help the HHR's circle of care health team to:

- identify you;
- understand your health care needs;
- provide information about your health condition if you are unable to communicate the information yourself;
- comply with legal requirements;
- evaluate and monitor the services you receive;
- plan for your future care needs.

How is my personal health information used?

Your personal health information will be shared, as necessary, within your circle of care health team to ensure that you get the services and programs you need or ask for. Your circle of care health team includes your doctors and our nurses, as well as other members who provide health services to you, such as HHR staff pharmacists and staff physiotherapists.

Regardless of who is involved in your care, each team member has a responsibility to protect your privacy and to keep your personal health information confidential and secure.

Who will have access to my personal information?

Your personal health information will be shared within your circle of care health team. Your information will be provided to members of your circle of care health team on a need-to-know basis, so that they can carry out their roles in meeting your specific requirements.

How is my personal health information protected?

Your personal health information is kept in strict confidence. Only authorized personnel within your circle of care health team are permitted to access your information, and only on a need-to-know basis. All HHR employees are required to adhere to the HHR's privacy policies. HHR also has safeguards in place to make sure that your information is stored securely and is protected from unauthorized use, loss or error, regardless of what form your health records take – either as paper-based documents or as electronic files.

Can my personal health information be shared outside my circle of care health team without my consent?

HHR will ask for your permission before disclosing information to anyone outside your circle of care. However, you should be aware that there are certain circumstances where the law may require or authorize HHR to release information without your consent. For more information, please contact the HHR's Privacy Officer at 306-766-4444, or see the HHR's [privacy policies and procedures](#) on-line at www.rqhealth.ca.

Will my personal health information be shared for the purposes of research?

With limited exceptions, we will ask your permission before your personal health information is used or shared for research purposes. You can be sure that when such research does take place it will have been approved first by the HHR Research Ethics Board.

In most cases, your personal health information will be deidentified by HHR before being used for research purposes. De-identified means that the health information is anonymous to ensure that there is no connection between you, as an individual, and your personal health information. Sometimes, it is not possible to de-identify personal health information for research purposes. In this situation, the HHR Research Ethics Board may grant a qualified researcher limited access to your identifiable personal health information. All researchers must sign an agreement of confidentiality and will not publish any findings that would identify you.

Can I access my personal health information?

Yes. Subject to certain limited exceptions, you have the right to read or request a copy of your health record. If you believe that the information in your personal health record is not accurate or complete, you have the right to request a change or an amendment to your record but you can not change a diagnosis. HHR can either make the change or add an addendum to your record noting a difference of opinion.

How can I access my personal health information?

You, someone you have given written permission to, or another person legally authorized to make a request on your behalf, can access your personal health information in two ways:

Verbally: If you are currently in HHR's care, you may ask to see your record from the health professional responsible for your care, which is usually your doctor. The health professional will be there when you review your record to explain medical terms and abbreviations. If the health information is not readily available, your health professional will refer you to the unit supervisor or Health Information Management Services.

In Writing: If you are no longer in HHR's care, you may submit a written request to access your personal health information. Send your request to HHR's Health Information Management Services Department in the facility where you received your care.

You may be charged a reasonable fee for accessing your record. You will be

informed of any applicable charges beforehand. The Region will respond to your request within 30 days. You will either be provided with access to your personal health information or you will be advised if your request will not be met within 30 days. For example, more time may be needed to collect your health record, or there may be some legal basis for refusing access to your personal health information.

The HHR can arrange for a health professional to review your personal information with you so that he/she can explain unfamiliar codes, terms and abbreviations used in your record.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding access to your personal health information or require assistance in making an access request, please contact either the Client Representative or the Privacy Officer. Contact information is listed at the end of this article.

Will my personal health information be shared with my family or friends while I am receiving care?

Unless you tell us otherwise, a health professional in your circle of care team may share your personal health information with your next-of-kin, or someone with whom you have a close personal relationship. The health professional will only release information about the services you are currently receiving from the HHR. The HHR will also provide your visitors with directions to your room if you are receiving care at one of our hospitals.

If you do not want your personal health information released to your family or close personal friends while you are receiving care, or if you do not wish HHR to provide visitors with directions to your room, please tell your health care team as soon as possible.

How long will you keep my personal health information?

HHR will keep your information for the length of time that is determined by law. Most information is kept for 10 years. When your personal health information is due for disposal, it will be destroyed in a secure and confidential manner.

What if I have a complaint or concern about my privacy in the HHR?

If you have concerns regarding your personal health information, or its use, you may be able to resolve your concern by talking to a member of your circle of care health team, such as a nurse or doctor. You may also ask to speak to the appropriate supervisor or manager.

If you wish to register a formal complaint regarding a privacy issue, you are encouraged to contact HHR's Privacy Officer:

Privacy Officer
Heartland Health Region
Box 2110

Rosetown, Saskatchewan, S0L 2V0
Phone: 306-882-4111, Ext. 234
Fax: 306-882-1389

If HHR is unable to resolve your complaint or concern to your satisfaction, you may contact the Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner. This provincial office oversees the *Health Information Protection Act* (HIPA) in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner can be contacted at:

Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner
503–1801 Hamilton Street
Regina, Saskatchewan, S4P 4B4
Phone: 306-787-8350, or
Toll-Free at 1-877-748-2298
Fax: 306-798-1603

Need more information?

You will find more information on the Internet:

Saskatchewan Health's HIPA Web site,
www.health.gov.sk.ca
Click on 'Health Legislation,' then 'HIPA.'

Saskatchewan Information and Privacy
Commissioner Web site
www.oipc.sk.ca
Click on 'HIPA.'