

Who has access to your health information?

AHS doctors, nurses, counsellors, and clinical Aboriginal Health Workers have access to your health information kept on paper and in our computerised health information system. This includes those employed in other AHS centres in Tasmania if you seek health care there. It also includes relieving doctors and nurses. Health reception staff have access to health information only for administrative purposes such as Medicare billing and filing.

Technical staff have access to the computerised health information system for technical purposes.

AHS staff members can access your contact details to let you know about preventive health care, such as reminders and invitations for health programs that are relevant to you. If you do not want your contact details to be used for this purpose, please let your doctor or health receptionist know.

If you have concerns about who has access to your health information, please speak with your doctor or staff supporting you.

Accessing medical services without disclosing your identity

In exceptional circumstances you may be given access to health care services without disclosing your true identity. We will only allow you to do this if we believe that you are eligible for AHS health care, your health care will not be prejudiced, and it would not involve any breach of the law.

Complaints

If you have any concern about the way we have handled your health information, you should generally first raise it with the doctor or other staff member concerned. If for some reason you feel that you are unable to raise your concern with that person, you should raise it with senior health service staff.

If you are still dissatisfied with the way your concern has been handled, you can make a complaint to the AHS Medical Director, or TAC CEO.

You can also contact:

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

GPO Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001
Phone 1300 363 992
Fax (02) 9284 9666

Health Complaints Commissioner

GPO Box 960
Hobart TAS 7001
Phone 1800 001 170
Fax (03) 6233 8966

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

GPO Box 5480
Sydney NSW 2001
Phone (02) 9126 3600

ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE (Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre)

56 Patrick Street
Hobart TAS 7001
Ph. 03 62 34 0777
Fax 03 62 34 0770

53 Alexander St
Burnie TAS 7320
Ph. 03 6431 3289
Fax 03 6431 8363

182 Charles St
Launceston TAS 7250
Ph. 03 6332 3888
Fax 03 6332 3899

PERSONAL INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND YOUR ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE

“Your Privacy is our Business”



Aboriginal Health Service

(Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre Inc)

PROTECTING THE PRIVACY OF YOUR HEALTH INFORMATION

This leaflet explains how personal information about your health is collected and managed by the Aboriginal Health Service (AHS). Staff at the AHS are bound by our confidentiality policies. You can request a copy of our *Privacy policy* from your health receptionist.

What is health information?

Information is called personal health information if it concerns your health, medical history or past or future medical care and if someone reading it would be able to identify you.

Collecting health information from you

We need to collect information from you about your personal circumstances and health to provide you with the best health care. Sometimes we will also need to collect information from other doctors, health services or your family. If we want to do this we will ask your permission first. The only exception is in an emergency situation where your health is seriously at risk and you are not able to provide it yourself or give us your consent.

You should only be asked to provide personal information that is relevant to your health care. If you have any doubts about giving the information you are asked to provide, ask the staff member why it is being requested.

Staff must make sure that you are able to provide health information in a way that protects your privacy. Generally this will be in a private space where others cannot hear what is being said.

Keeping your health information accurate

The AHS will do our best to make sure your medical records:

- Are accurate, comprehensive, well organised and legible and up to date
- Have enough information to allow another doctor, Counsellor or specialist to care for you
- Contain a summary of your care
- Can be used to remind you to return for follow up, checks and immunisations

Keeping your health information secure

We have a duty to prevent interference, unauthorised access or disclosure, or loss in relation to your health information.

Paper records are kept securely in filing cabinets which are locked when not in use and kept in offices which are locked after hours. AHS offices are equipped with monitored security and alarm systems.

Staff need a password to access the computerised health information system. Issuing of passwords is strictly controlled by the system administrator. Breaches of internal security will lead to disciplinary action against offending staff, usually instant dismissal.

Your health information in the computerised system is backed up both by our own IT contractor and by the system developer, HealthConnex, who are under a non-disclosure agreement. Back-ups are tested routinely to make sure your health information can be retrieved in the event of a disaster at the AHS.

How we use your health information

AHS doctors, GP registrars, counsellors, nurses and clinical Aboriginal Health Workers will be the main users of your health information, but other staff will have limited access to some of your health record and will use it, as necessary, for purposes directly related to your health.

Your health information will also be disclosed, as necessary, for other purposes directly related to your health care such as hospital referrals and obtaining Medicare rebates, specialist reports and pathology tests. This will usually be with your consent except in emergency situations.

We disclose information to state and national health registers such as the Australian Immunisation Register, The National (HPV) Vaccination Program Register and the Tasmanian Cervical Screening Register. We may collect and use information from these registers to keep accurate records and provide appropriate reminders.

The AHS undertakes research and quality improvement activities from time to time. Where you can be identified, your information will not be used for research without your consent.

Other than as stated above, information that identifies you will not be disclosed without your consent unless the law requires us to do so (e.g. for law enforcement purposes).

Access by you to your health information

You have a right to be told what health (and other) information we keep on you, and to have access to this information except in certain circumstances.

Access can be obtained by asking your doctor. The best time to do this is when you have an appointment. Your doctor can refuse access if this is likely to seriously threaten anybody's life or health, including your own. If we refuse access, we will tell you why.