

PERSONAL HEALTH RECORDS (PHRs)

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Although a huge amount of medical information is compiled by our health care providers, it is not always a guarantee that we have immediate access to our records or that they will never be destroyed. Therefore, a Personal Health Record (PHR), compiled by you, is an effective way of documenting important personal and health related information about you or someone you care for. Doctors, hospitals, and pharmacists create and maintain medical information; however, personal and observational information must come from *you*.

A personal health record must contain four types of information to be effective:

- 1) **Personal (name, address, contacts)**
- 2) **Medical (doctor visits, ER visits, diagnostic tests, surgeries)**

3) **Medicinal (prescriptions, supplements)**

4) **Observational (notes from doctor's visits, diet or exercise records, reactions to medications)**

A PHR can be beneficial in providing information in a wide array of situations: in emergencies when it may be difficult to remember critical information, in the case of evacuation (when computerized data is not available), as a backup to your doctors' records (they may be destroyed as part of a normal file retention policy), if you are a caregiver (quick reference), if you have a college student or are a parent with children of any age (immunization records and medical histories), if you are a newly wed (background information that your spouse may not know), and if you are a snowbird or have a second home (and see doctors in more than one city).

To start organizing your PHR, talk to your healthcare providers (primary physician, dentist, eye doctor, specialists, etc.) about how you can obtain pertinent information from your medical records.

Speak to your pharmacist in regard to prescription information.

Track family history, past and future appointments, medications, tests, and treatments. Make sure to include emergency contact information as well as insurance information, in addition to copies of any medical directive, preferences, and living will.

Most importantly- keep the information current, ensure that others know where the PHR binder is kept, and take it with you to each new doctor visit. The more prepared you are and the more easily you can communicate pertinent health information, the more helpful and effective you and your family's healthcare visits will be.