

Keeping up With Your Medical Information!

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The last time you went to a health care provider did you have all of the information readily available to answer the medical questions you were asked? Would you be able to answer an emergency response team's important questions? If you had to travel in an emergency, would you be able to get your hands on all of the documents you might need quickly?

By keeping your families' health records up-to-date and complete, you can play a more active role in your health care. Having your records all in one place will show a more complete picture about your health. It can include any information that might affect your health such as:

- Factor infusion calendars
- Exercise routines
- Dietary habits
- Glucose monitoring
- Records of appointments, vaccinations, and other healthcare services
- Medication records

You may be seeing several health care providers and receiving tests and medications from each. In this scenario, there is no way that you can expect your primary care physician to keep up with your complete medical history without some assistance. What is the best way to keep up with all of this medical information?

Step 1: Gather any information you have regarding your health. You can get most of this information from any practitioners that you have seen. Requesting your record may require signing an "authorization for the release of information." (At this point you might also want to sign a release form authorizing your closest relative to have access to your records if needed). These may be kept in an electronic format or you may be able to get a paper copy (some offices charge a fee for this). You can also ask your provider which records you might need to keep for yourself. Remember you may want records from your general practitioner, hematologist, eye doctor, dentist, dietician, and any other specialist you have seen.

Step 2: Once you start gathering the information, there are several ways of maintaining your records. File folders are a great way to start the process. A three-ring binder can be a neat way to take your record with you to future appointments. You can divide this binder by doctors, years, or treatments. Computer disks or flash drives can also be taken with you and accessed if the medical office is set up to do so. Having both a paper record and an electronic version might be the best way to keep track of everything. You can also include a section for questions that come to mind so you can have it with you the next time you see your doctor.

Step 3: Bring your records with you to each appointment so you will have all of your information at your fingertips. Remember to update the information as it changes.

Step 4: Carry a card in your wallet or purse that has all of your vital information on it, such as your Bleeding Action Plan. Your Hemophilia of Georgia Outreach Nurse can help you keep this updated. Since you won't always have your health record with you, make those who need to know about your record aware of its location. Be sure to keep it safe and protected. As you gather and organize your health information, I hope you have found this article helpful and of assistance as you partner with your health care providers for your better health.