HeartKids

Privacy in health care

Information for young people about their rights to privacy when accessing health care.

What is privacy in health care?

Privacy in a health care situation means that what you tell your doctor or health care provider stays confidential (between you and them). This includes the details of your medications and all other personal information. You have a legal right to this privacy.

Why is privacy in health care important?

Research has shown that sometimes young people avoid getting medical help because they fear their parents finding out about it. This could be in relation to sexual health and contraception, mental health, alcohol, or other sensitive topics.

Growing up, you probably attended all your medical appointments with your parent or carer. As you get older, you may have questions you would like to ask your doctor without your family in the room. A private chat gives you the opportunity to do this.

As you get older, you will take more control of your own health. This includes attending appointments on your own.

Will the doctor keep our conversation private?

If you are under 18 years of age, a doctor will keep your conversations and appointment notes private if they decide that you can make decisions on your own and that you are not in danger.

If a health professional believes that you are in danger or at risk of serious harm, they are legally required to tell the appropriate people. This is only so that they can keep yourself and others safe.

The best way to know for sure what information about you will be kept private and what won't be is to ask your doctor at the beginning of the appointment.

How do I talk to my doctor about privacy?

You can ask your doctor for a confidential appointment. This is a normal question that they are used to hearing. In fact, many doctors think that having a private chat for part of the appointment is a good thing. Doing this helps prepare you for the future when you will be managing your own health care.

Even if you are on your parent's Medicare Card, you can ask your doctor for a confidential appointment.

This fact sheet was reviewed and updated by HeartKids in March 2021. It was endorsed by our Clinical Advisory Committee at the time of publication. Clinical information might change after this date. The information in this fact sheet is general. It is not a substitute for medical advice from your doctor. Always talk to your doctor about matters that affect your health.

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Where to find more information and support

ReachOut

au.reachout.com

Learn more about privacy and your rights to confidentiality in health care.

HeartKids

heartkids.org.au

Learn more about CHD and the support HeartKids can offer you.

1800 432 785

Call the HeartKids Helpline for support, advice and guidance.

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