

**TAKE  
CHARGE**  
OF YOUR HEALTH

YOUR PERSONAL  
HEALTH MANUAL

# Personal Health Record: A Tool For Managing Your Health

Throughout the years it is likely that you will visit a handful (or more) of health care providers. In turn, your medical information may become scattered between many clinics and offices.

As a health care consumer, this is problematic. What if a specialist is uninformed about an allergy to a medication your physician is planning to prescribe you? Or how will your physician know that your cholesterol levels increased significantly this year if he/she isn't aware of what your levels were last year or the year before?

The answer is that he/she may not be aware of this unless you know and communicate the information to them. And that's why a personal health record is an essential tool for all individuals who want to manage their health and health care well.

Maintaining a personal health record ensures that your most important health information is stored in one location and available to you, family members, and health care providers when needed. With your personal health record, you are empowered to:

- **Knowledgably discuss your health and health care decisions with health care providers.**
- **Be more aware of and monitor your personal health status over time.**
- **Provide important health information to new health care providers.**
- **Keep an active eye on your progress toward your health and wellness goals.**
- **Reduce or eliminate unnecessary duplicate tests and procedures ordered by providers.**
- **Stay up-to-date on vaccinations and preventive health activities.**

Keep in mind that your personal health record and your medical record **ARE NOT THE SAME.**

- **A medical record includes information about your health and is compiled and retained by each of your health care providers.**
- **The personal health record contains your important health information and it is maintained by you.**

Each will contain slightly different information.

Constructing a personal health record is a good first step for those wanting to play a more significant role in monitoring and managing their health and health care decisions. The Take Charge wellness incentive challenge provides individuals with a step-by-step process to create a personal health record. Give it a try today!

# Selecting the Right Provider

Nearly 25% of American adults do not have a primary health care provider whom they regularly receive care from according to the National Health Care Quality Report, 2010.

Individuals with a primary care provider have several advantages when using the health care system. These individuals tend to have greater trust in their provider when there is an established relationship and also experience better provider-patient communication. These factors increase the likelihood that patients will receive appropriate and timely care when needed. By learning about patients' diverse health care needs over time, a primary care provider can coordinate care (e.g., visits to specialists) to better meet patients' needs. Bottom line, having a primary care provider correlates with receipt of higher quality care.

Selecting a primary care provider is an important step in taking care of your health and health care needs.

**Your primary care provider is the professional you usually see for general health problems. When choosing, you will need to decide if you want to select a medical doctor, general or family practitioner, an internist, doctor of osteopathic medicine, advanced nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant.**

**"Never go  
to a doctor  
whose  
office plants  
have died."**

Erma Bombeck

Ask others for recommendations. Do you know a good primary care provider? Would you recommend your primary care provider? What do you like about him/her? How long does it take to get an appointment? Can you usually see your primary care provider right away if you need to, like on the same day if you get sick?

**Consider the office location and whether or not it will be convenient and accessible for you. Is there ample parking or public transportation nearby?**

Verify that the provider is in good standing with the state's medical board and is board certified.

**Inquire about the services (lab, x-ray, etc) offered at the office and which hospitals extend privileges to the provider.**

Find out who you will see when the provider is unavailable.

**Meet the staff and be certain that they seem caring, compassionate, patient knowledgeable, and friendly.**

Ask about the average wait time for an appointment.

**Check with your insurance company to determine if the provider is in your network and if the hospital(s) the provider is affiliated with is also covered.**

Visit with the provider to determine if he/she answers questions thoroughly, takes time to understand your concerns, and has good bedside manners.

# Advanced Care Planning

What kind of medical care would you want if you were too ill or hurt to express your wishes?

Advance directives are legal documents that allow you to convey your decisions about end-of-life care to friends and health care professionals, and to avoid confusion later on. They are an important piece of the personal health record.

**1.LIVING WILL** – This document clearly outlines the types of medical treatments and life-sustaining measures you do and do not want for yourself in the event that you are unable to communicate your wishes.

**2.MEDICAL POWER OF ATTORNEY** – It is here that you designate someone you trust to make medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to do so.

**3.DO NOT RESUSCITATE ORDER** – This puts into writing your wish to not be revived with cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if your heart stops working or you stop breathing.

Having a conversation about illnesses, surgeries, or death is never easy. However, the importance of talking to loved ones about this cannot be understated. Discuss your thoughts, feelings, and wishes about your medical care and treatment periodically with those closest to you. Let others know that you are preparing advance directives for your benefit, as well as theirs. These documents will, hopefully, take much of the guesswork out of the decisions that they ultimately may have to make on your behalf.

Advance directives should always be in writing. Provide loved ones and your care providers with copies so that these documents are readily accessible when needed.

Each state has different laws pertaining to advance directives. Consult with your health care provider and a legal professional to be certain that the documents comply with all applicable laws in your state. State-specific forms may be found on the internet and at the National Hospice and Palliative Care website.

Continue talking to your loved ones and care providers about your wishes for medical care and treatment. The more they know, the better equipped they will be to make important decisions on your behalf.

Lastly, make it a point to periodically review your advance directives. It is not unusual to change perspective about medical care and treatment. Be sure that your documents reflect any changes in how you wish to be treated and cared for and that you communicate these changes to loved ones.

## Quick Quiz: Do You Know Your Doctors?

Physicians have enjoyed their fair share of time in the spotlight on the big screen and in television sitcoms. While their medical credentials may not amount to anything, many actors and actresses who have landed the role of a doctor on stage or in front of the camera have enjoyed much stardom in these roles. See if you can identify the famous Hollywood doctor from the clues listed below.

- 1. Clue:** Nicknamed "Hawkeye"
- 2. Clue:** He was a psychiatrist and cannibalistic serial killer
- 3. Clue:** Boy genius
- 4. Clue:** An OB-GYN doctor, this father of four made everyone laugh
- 5. Clue:** She was skeptical about the existence of extra terrestrial life
- 6. Clue:** World-renowned chief of Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital's diagnostic department
- 7. Clue:** One of the most kindly and skilled docs on television in the 70s

### ANSWERS

**Answer 1:** Dr. Benjamin Franklin "Hawkeye" Pierce from M\*A\*S\*H. Following completion of his medical residency in Boston, the doctor, played by Alan Alda, is drafted into the U.S. Army Medical Corps and serves at the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M\*A\*S\*H) during the Korean War.

**Answer 2:** Dr. Hannibal Lecter from Silence of the Lambs. Played by Anthony Hopkins in this box office hit, Dr. Lecter is by far one of the scariest doctors played in the movies.

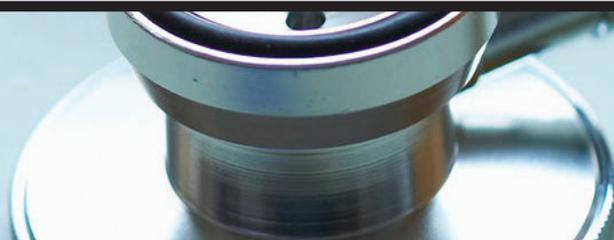
**Answer 3:** Dr. Doogie Howser from Doogie Houser, M.D. Played by Neil Patrick Harris, Doogie completed medical school at age 14 and faced adolescence while practicing medicine.

**Answer 4:** Dr. Heathcliff "Cliff" Huxtable from The Cosby Show. Played by Bill Cosby, this fun-loving physician warmed the hearts of many during the show's nine year run.

**Answer 5:** Dr. Dana Skully from the X-Files. Played by Gillian Anderson, Dr. Skully dedicated her life to investigating alien life forms on Earth.

**Answer 6:** Dr. Gregory House from House. His unorthodox and often abrasive manner is legendary and contributes to Dr. House's reputation as the resident grouch/know-it-all with a cane on this popular television show.

**Answer 7:** Dr. Marcus Welby from Dr. Marcus Welby, M.D. Running from 1969 to 1976, this hit show portrayed a physician able to spend ample length of time with patients and always choose the proper diagnostic tests and treatment.



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## Be In the Know: An Explanation of Health Numbers

Collecting and compiling your important health numbers is a sound first step. The next step is to gain an understanding how these numbers can help paint a picture of your health status. Let's take a closer look at what each health number represents. Then visit with your primary health care provider about steps you can take to maintain healthy numbers.

HEALTH NUMBER	WHY IT'S IMPORTANT...
<p><b>Blood Pressure</b></p> <p>The force of blood against the arteries when the heart beats and rests.</p>	<p>High blood pressure increases the risk for heart disease and stroke. High blood pressure is called the "silent killer" because it often has no warning signs or symptoms, and many people don't realize they have it. That's why it's important to get your blood pressure checked regularly.</p>
<p><b>Total Cholesterol</b></p> <p>Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that your body needs.</p>	<p>When you have too much cholesterol in your blood, it can build up on the walls of your arteries. Having high blood cholesterol puts you at risk for heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States. About 1 of every 6 adult Americans has high blood cholesterol.</p>
<p><b>LDL-Cholesterol</b></p> <p>There are several types of cholesterol in the body. LDL is known as "bad" cholesterol.</p>	<p>Having high levels can lead to a buildup of plaque in the arteries and result in heart disease. Regular exercise, maintaining a healthy body weight, and eating a healthy diet help lower elevated LDL cholesterol levels.</p>
<p><b>HDL-Cholesterol</b></p> <p>Known as the "good" cholesterol because it absorbs cholesterol and carries it back to the liver, which flushes it from the body.</p>	<p>High levels reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.</p>
<p><b>Waist Circumference</b></p> <p>Measurement around your bare abdomen just above your hip bone.</p>	<p>Excessive abdominal fat is serious because it places you at greater risk for developing obesity-related conditions, such as Type 2 Diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high triglycerides, high blood pressure, and coronary artery disease.</p>
<p><b>Blood Glucose</b></p> <p>The amount of sugar or glucose in the blood.</p>	<p>Elevated blood glucose levels put you at increased risk for developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.</p>
<p><b>Triglycerides</b></p> <p>A type of fat in the blood. Triglycerides are consumed via food and our body can make them also.</p>	<p>Elevated triglyceride levels are linked to the occurrence of coronary artery disease or may occur as a result of untreated diabetes.</p>
<p><b>Body Mass Index (BMI)</b></p> <p>Calculated from a person's height and weight, BMI helps to categorize whether one is at a healthy weight.</p>	<p>Overweight and obese individuals are at increased risk for high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, and some forms of cancer.</p>