OUR PRIVACY OBIGATIONS TO YOU

Vancouver Coastal Health is committed to protecting your personal information

At VCH, staff must protect your privacy in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA). That means we will treat your ‘personal information’ as confidential, only use and share it for purposes permitted by law and securely store and protect it. Our staff sign a Confidentiality Undertaking when they are hired confirming that they will safeguard your information.

What is “personal information”?

Personal information is any recorded information that identifies you. For example, it includes your home address, home phone number, sex, race, religion, fingerprints, disability or blood type. It also includes information about your health care and treatment, education, finances or employment details, anyone else’s opinions about you and your own views and opinions.

Who can look at, use or share your personal information?

Only authorized individuals who “need to know” your information in order to provide care and other care-related services may look at your personal information. They may use and share it for the following purposes:

- To provide immediate, ongoing and future care and services
- To assist us to improve the quality of your care and services
- For approved research in accordance FIPPA
- For teaching and education purposes (for example, training physicians and nurses)
- To understand your eligibility for benefits, services and to arrange payment

Your personal information may also be disclosed to others as required by law (for example, to respond to a court order) or under specific statute (for example, Coroner’s Act or Adult Guardianship Act).

What about electronic health records?

In the past, hospitals, clinics and other care providers stored information about your care and treatment in a paper record. Nowadays, technology allows us to store personal health information electronically. Your electronic health record is a computerized version of your paper health record. It is used to document care, plan for discharge, review the quality of care provided at Vancouver Coastal Health and for related health care purposes. We are able to audit these records to assess whether access is appropriate or not. Users of our systems may only access your personal information on a “need to know” basis.
**What about accessing my health records?**

You or your authorized representative can request access to or copies of your health record by writing to the Health Records Department at the site where you received care within the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. They will assist you in accessing the records you wish to see and are entitled to receive.

**How long will it take to obtain copies of requested portions of my health record?**

While FIPPA allows for up to 30 business days from receipt of your access request to provide you with your record, many requests can be fulfilled sooner than that time frame.

**How can I request corrections to the information in my health record?**

If you believe there is incorrect information in your health record, you can write to the Health Records department at the site where you received care at Vancouver Coastal Health. They will work with you to address your concerns.

**Will I have to pay for a copy of my health record?**

Generally NO, but you may be charged for special processing of your request, for example, requests for copies of the same information, courier fees, special delivery, or other special processing services.

**Did you Know?**

- There is a new statute called the *E-Health (Personal Health Information Access and Protection of Privacy) Act* or the ‘E-Health Act’ in British Columbia. This Act deals with electronic databases that are designated as ‘health information banks’ and provides for special privacy protections for personal information of our patients and clients.

- 10 million Canadians use social networking sites on the internet (example, FaceBook, MySpace, Twitter), of which the majority are young Canadians. This makes them among the most wired in the world. Young people use these sites to make new friends, stay connected with old ones, chat about what’s happening in their lives or share photos. Many think that what they do on the Net is private but this is not true! These technologies can be used to monitor their behaviour online or allow their private information to be stored and sold, often without them ever knowing about it.

What can you do to protect your privacy on these networking sites? Choose a “closed network” to limit the circle of friends who can access your profile. THINK before you post anything knowing it may be seen by your boss or family, etc. Block access to information by anyone other than verified friends or friends of friends. Choose the highest and most restrictive security setting available and do not give out information like your birth date, full name, phone number, or address.

**Any Comments about this Newsletter?**

What do you think about this newsletter? Did you find it helpful? Are there any other topics that you’d like to see? Any suggestions or ways to improve our future publications would be most welcome. You can send your comments and/or suggestions to privacy@vch.ca or leave a message on our privacy hotline phone at 604.875.5568.