

Keeping your healthcare
information secure:

Simple security and privacy tips



Australian Government
Australian Digital Health Agency



This guide provides awareness of privacy settings that you can use to adjust your My Health Record to suit your own requirements. These settings are available in addition to the robust system-wide security controls that are in place to protect the security and privacy of information stored within the My Health Record system.

Information within this guide also outlines a number of good information security practices, such as use of strong passwords, and regularly updating your own systems and software, which can help to protect your personal information.

This guide provides general guidance in relation to information security and is not intended to be comprehensive.

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Digital healthcare information

To support your health and wellbeing, you can access a range of digital information in the My Health Record system and manage how this information is shared with your healthcare providers. If you have a My Health Record, there are a number of settings within your record that will help to enhance information security and maintain your privacy when you and others are accessing this data.

The Australian Digital Health Agency (the Agency) has many safeguards in place to protect the information held in the My Health Record system such as strong encryption, firewalls, secure login/authentication mechanisms and audit logging. This guide outlines some of the simple things you can do to further protect your information that appears in your My Health Record; when it is accessed via a computer, tablet, mobile device or wearable device.

Information is good medicine

There are many benefits to having healthcare information that is easily accessible by your authorised healthcare providers. Your My Health Record gives healthcare providers access to your clinical information, which has been prepared and shared by other health professionals. This ensures they have a more detailed picture with which to make clinical decisions and diagnoses, and provide treatment to you.

The ability to access information held within your My Health Record is controlled by you. For example, you can add a code that you or your nominated representative can give to specific healthcare organisations so they can access and view your My Health Record.

Safeguards to protect your My Health Record

In addition to the safeguards that protect the information in the My Health Record system, there are five simple steps you can take to keep your information safe and private:

1. When accessing your My Health Record (via myGov) use a unique passphrase and set up secret questions and answers or an access code (via SMS or the myGov Access app).
2. Regularly check your My Health Record for accuracy using a secure connection.
3. Review your My Health Record access log to see when your information has been accessed, and choose to receive notifications (email or SMS) when a healthcare organisation accesses your record for the first time.
4. Carefully read emails and manually enter login details rather than clicking on links or attachments (Note: we will never ask for a password to your My Health Record by email or SMS).
5. Turn on automatic updates on the system you access My Health Record from, to apply system and software patches, including for internet browsers.

Your options for security and privacy

The My Health Record system is a secure online portal, designed to provide a summary of your health information to trusted healthcare professionals. By default, documents in your My Health Record are set to 'general access' for your healthcare providers so they can upload clinical documents and view your information, in relation to a healthcare consultation or clinical event. You can change the default settings at any time.

There are a number of settings that you can apply to restrict access to healthcare information or clinical documents in your My Health Record that you prefer to keep private. You can also provide access to nominated representatives such as a family member acting as your carer.

Access Control Settings

You can maintain privacy and control access to your My Health Record by adjusting the settings for:

- **Individuals** – allowing people you trust such as family members, friends or carers to view and help manage the information stored in your My Health Record
- **Healthcare Providers** – changing the default setting to apply restrictions for an entire healthcare organisation
- **Documents** – restricting access to specific documents relating to visits to healthcare providers, or medicines that you are taking or have taken.

To customise security and privacy controls, you can change the level of access to your information by setting one or more codes:

1. **Record Access Code (RAC)** – provided by you, to healthcare organisations you want to access your record (if you have restricted access to your record).
2. **Limited Document Access Code (LDAC)** – provided by you, to healthcare organisations you want to access restricted documents, when you have chosen to limit access to these documents
3. **Personal Access Code (PAC)** – provided by you, to your nominated representative to enable them to access your My Health Record.

Read the Detailed Security and Privacy Tips section of this guide to learn how to set your access controls.



Scenario – Taking care of an elderly parent

You have recently become a carer for your elderly parent and this includes taking them to see a variety of healthcare providers. Fortunately, they have a My Health Record that contains a discharge summary and pathology reports from their recent stay at the local hospital. It would be helpful if you could see some of this information when taking your parent to follow up visits with their General Practitioner. You visit the My Health Record website and discover it is possible for your parent to give you access to their record and restricted documents, as a nominated representative.

Nominated Representative Access

You may wish to give family, close friends or carers access to your My Health Record. There are three access levels that you can allocate to a nominated representative:

1. **General Access** – view all documents, except those you have marked as restricted
2. **Restricted Access** – view all documents, including those you have marked as restricted
3. **Full Access** – view all documents and make additions to your My Health Record.

Read the Detailed Security and Privacy Tips section of this guide to learn how to nominate a representative.

Monitoring Access

A sound security practice is to monitor access to your My Health Record. This is made easier by choosing to receive notifications by email, SMS or mail. You will be automatically notified the first time your record has been accessed by each healthcare provider organisation.

Another way to review access to your record is to log on and view the record access history log. By default, the record access history Summary Page shows the most recent access activity within the last 12 months, with the option to view information prior to this timeframe.

Read the Detailed Security and Privacy Tips section of this guide to learn how to view your access history.

Emergency Access

In emergency situations, healthcare providers can view your My Health Record to provide the appropriate treatment quickly. For example, if you were unconscious, your healthcare provider may be granted access to your record, if there is a serious threat to your health and safety. This will override any privacy restrictions you have set (however any documents you have previously removed will not be accessible). Your provider will need your Medicare number, surname, date of birth and gender to search for your record. The Agency monitors and audits all use of emergency access.

Privacy Settings


Within your My Health Record there are a number of privacy settings so you can restrict access to:


- Clinical documents that you consider sensitive
- All or specific types of Medicare documents.

You are also able to remove clinical and/or Medicare documents from your My Health Record. It is important to understand that clinical documents you remove will not be accessible, even in an emergency. If you change your mind, or remove a document by mistake, you can choose to restore the document.

The My Health Record system is governed by legislation that protects your personal information. The legislation includes penalties for unauthorised access to the information in your My Health Record.

For detailed information about the My Health Record, privacy settings, privacy policy and managing My Health Record for someone other than you, such as parents or children:

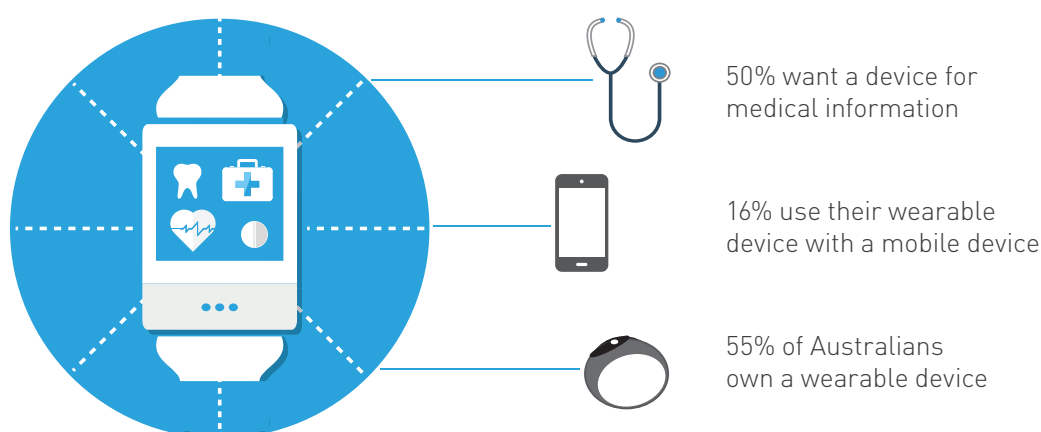
 myhealthrecord.gov.au

 1800 723 471

Wearing your health on your sleeve

Wearable devices are helping people to be able to stay in their homes for treatment or improve their health and fitness. The My Health Record system is capable of allowing mobile device applications (apps) to access the information in your My Health Record, with your consent. Apps may be able to display your My Health Record information in different ways and send information to your record, such as creating a personal health summary within the application.

Figure 1: Key findings of survey on wearable devices¹



Using wearable devices and mobile applications

Depending on the compatibility of the approved app you may be able to view sections within your My Health Record using wearable devices, such as an Apple or Samsung digital watch. To protect your security and privacy, the Agency requires approved apps to have in-built security features to authenticate you are the owner of the information and obtain your consent before accessing your My Health Record. The security and privacy controls you apply in your My Health Record settings will also apply to the use of information accessed via a mobile app.

Protecting your information on mobile devices

There are some extra safeguards you can do to keep your information safe when using a health app on your mobile device:

- > Choose a unique and complex password for logging onto your device (i.e. not the same as your My Health Record passphrase or other online passwords)
- > Turn on automatic updates within your mobile device settings, to apply patches that often address known security vulnerabilities
- > Switch off Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connectivity when you're not using them
- > Check the privacy policy for your device and apps to see how your data could be used
- > Be cautious when accepting requests to access information on your device or app
- > Take care when using social sharing features or free WiFi.





Detailed Security and Privacy Tips

Set a strong passphrase to protect your My Health Record

A strong 'passphrase' is a combination of at least 12 upper and lower case letters, numbers and symbols². It is similar to a password in usage, but is generally longer for added security. The hardest type of passphrase to crack is one that combines at least four words and is not related to you, your work or your immediate family. Once you have selected four or more words that you can remember, incorporate some numbers or symbols.

Tips for a strong password

✓ consider creating a longer passphrase by combining at least four unrelated words	✗ don't include names of pets or immediate family members, or their dates of birth
✓ use a combination of characters that are easy for you to remember	✗ don't choose a password that is easy for others to guess
✓ use a separate password for each account and device	✗ never share your passwords
✓ enable multi-factor authentication if it is available – for example, use of a password plus a finger print scan or single use code	✗ avoid using repeated characters, numeric sequences (e.g. 1234), single dictionary words, and your address

Use a unique passphrase for the device that you use to access the My Health Record system

It is important to use a unique passphrase for your device and for each of your online accounts. If you use the same passphrase, it could be used to access your personal information if someone were to guess your device's passphrase.

This is good advice for all the different information you want to keep safe including your My Health Record, social media and online banking. You should also avoid recycling old passwords and passphrases or making simple and easy to guess changes like increasing a number at the end.

You can access your My Health Record using your mobile device

To allow a mobile device application to access to your My Health Record you will need to provide access within your mobile device application. When you login to your My Health Record, you will be presented with a myGov username and password screen followed by a secret question and answer page. You will then see a consent page which asks whether you allow the application to have access to your My Health Record. Read the information on this page carefully, so that you are aware of the terms and conditions.

If you change your mind after you have allowed a mobile device application (app) to access your My Health Record, you can revoke access for that app. If you decide to revoke access, it is important to note that information that has previously been accessed may still be retained by the app. Check the terms and conditions for the app before allowing access or contact the vendor to discuss any concerns.

You can see when your My Health Record is accessed

You can log in to your My Health Record, click on the Privacy & Access tab and scroll down to Record Access History. This will show the latest activity in your record within the last 12 months, including when you have accessed or made changes to your My Health Record. Older information can be accessed by clicking on the link that says Show Full Access History.

You can choose to receive notifications when your My Health Record is accessed

If you would like to receive notifications when your My Health Record has been accessed for the first time by a healthcare provider:

1. Log in to your My Health Record
2. Click the Profile & Settings tab
3. Select your preferred notification method (i.e. send via email or SMS).

You can control who can access your My Health Record

To control which healthcare organisations can access your My Health Record, set a Record Access Code (RAC) and then give it to the healthcare organisations that you would like to have access to your record:

1. Log in to your My Health Record
2. Click the Privacy & Access tab
3. Scroll to the 'Access by Healthcare Providers' section and select 'Manage Access'
4. Scroll to 'All Other Healthcare Providers' and select 'Manage Access'
5. Set a 4-8 character code and give it to your healthcare provider(s).

If you forget your code you can re-enter and validate a new code at any time. You will only need to provide the new code to those healthcare providers that have not previously had access to your My Health Record.

You can restrict access to specific documents within your My Health Record

To restrict access to particular documents, you will need to change the document access level:

1. Log in to your My Health Record
2. Select a document from the 'Documents' section in the navigation menu.
3. Select 'Manage Access' from the options on the top right of the document.
4. Select the 'Change Access Level' button to change the document from 'General Access' to 'Restricted Access'

To provide a healthcare organisation with access to your restricted documents, you can set a limited document access code (LDAC), which you can give to your healthcare providers:

1. Click the Privacy & Access tab
2. Scroll to 'Document Access Settings' and click 'Manage Access'
3. Click on 'Set your Limited Document Access Code'
4. Set a 4-8 character code and give it to your healthcare provider(s).

Your restricted documents can also be viewed by healthcare providers that have 'Restricted Access' to your record.

You can choose to remove documents from your My Health Record

If you want to remove a document from your My Health Record:

1. Log in to your My Health Record
2. Click the 'Documents' tab and select the document(s) you wish to remove
3. Select 'Manage Access'
4. Select 'Remove Document' and enter a reason for removal
5. Select 'Save' to remove the document from your record, followed by 'Okay' on the confirmation message.

It is important to understand that documents you remove are not accessible to healthcare providers, even in an emergency situation. The healthcare provider who authored the document will be able to see that the document has been removed, but will no longer be able to open the document using the My Health Record system.

You can choose to restore a document if you change your mind or remove the document in error.



Detailed Security and Privacy Tips

If you are concerned that something in your My Health Record is not accurate, contact your healthcare provider to discuss

If you have a concern about the clinical information appearing in your My Health Record you can speak with the healthcare provider that uploaded the document or information, and explain your concerns to them.

For other queries, you can contact the My Health Record Help line on 1800 723 471.

You can choose to set up a nominated representative for your My Health Record

If you would like an individual, such as a family member or carer, to access to your My Health Record:

1. Log in to your My Health Record
2. Click the Privacy & Access tab
3. Click the Manage Access button
4. Select Invite Someone and enter the name of the person that you wish to provide access to
5. Choose the preferred type of access (i.e. general, restricted or full).

Once you confirm you have entered the correct details, a Personal Access Code (PAC) for that nominated representative will appear on the screen. This needs to be noted and then provided to the nominated representative.

The PAC is a temporary access code that expires within 30 days and is used by the nominated representative to confirm that you have granted them access to your My Health Record. You can generate a new PAC if it expires, was not written down, was noted incorrectly or is misplaced.

Understand what a nominated representative can do if they have full access to your My Health Record

By giving a nominated representative full access to your My Health Record they can view all documents; and add information such as any new allergies or your emergency contacts. A nominated representative with full access cannot register an individual for a My Health Record, cancel your My Health Record, make changes to other nominated representatives or update your Medicare document consent details.

Can my record be permanently deleted?

You can cancel your My Health Record at any time. It is also possible to register again at a later Yes. In accordance with the *My Health Records Amendment (Strengthening Privacy) Bill 2018*, you can request permanent deletion of your My Health Record, and any backups. For more information, visit myhealthrecord.gov.au

Turn on automatic updates to protect your information

Regularly updating your operating system and software helps to protect you from security vulnerabilities.

Most systems and software applications will have an option that is accessed in the settings menu to automatically apply updates. Consult the help menu in your software for detailed instructions on how to turn automatic updates on and configure the way they are installed on your computer and devices.



How to find additional information and support for using My Health Record

Call the My Health Record Help line on 1800 723 471 or visit myhealthrecord.gov.au

Find out about keeping other information that you access online safe

To learn more about how you can protect other information that you access online, visit www.staysmartonline.gov.au and search for the guide for individuals.

You can also choose to receive free updates about the latest information security risks.

Subscribe at www.staysmartonline.gov.au and www.scamwatch.gov.au.



References

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My Health Record

Find out more about My Health Record:

[MyHealthRecord.gov.au](https://myhealthrecord.gov.au)

Help line 1800 723 471