

# Tips for Record Requests

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If patients have never requested their medical records from their doctor or hospital before, the process can seem complicated. However, a few basic steps can help streamline the process:

**Read online or call the facility's HIM department** for information specific to your request. This will give you time to collect the required information and documentation before you arrive. If you are requesting another person's records, you can confirm in advance that you will have authorization.

**Provide as much information as you can on the authorization form.** This will speed up request processing by giving HIM professionals sufficient data to track down your records. If you have a common last name, provide extra information about yourself, such as your date of birth or the last four digits of your Social Security number.

**Bring a valid government-issued photo ID** and all other required legal documents with you when you pick up a record request. HIM professionals by law must deny requests where the individual cannot prove his or her identity or his or her right to access the records.

**Tell the HIM staff why you are requesting the record.** HIM professionals can help ensure you receive the records you need-and not the ones you don't. The set of records one should request for personal use, for example, can be different from the set of records sent to a doctor for continuing care. A person's medical record can be hundreds of pages long, so requesting your entire record may be too much, especially if the facility charges a per-page fee for compiling and reproducing it.

**Indicate if the request is urgent...** Many facilities triage their record requests, putting the most time-sensitive and care-oriented requests first.

**...but allow as much time as you can.** Not all facilities honor rush requests, however; some fulfill orders in the order in which they were received. When possible, make your request well before you need the documents (between five and 15 days out).

**Don't request your records before being discharged.** If you need records from your hospital stay sent to a physician for follow-up care, request the record transfer when you are discharged. This will ensure all of your records are sent, including the discharge summary.

## Read More Online

<http://journal.ahima.org> "How to Request Your Medical Records"

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