

Get It In Writing!

February 2nd, 2011 by Elizabeth Binsfield, RN

One of the savviest (and most basic) things you can do to stay on top of your health and well-being is to maintain a thorough and current personal health record. Sure, your doctor has all that information in his or her files for you...If you have appointments regularly. And if you're really honest about your risk factors and medical background during those appointments. (I'm not preaching, I'm just sayin'...) But part of taking charge of your own healthcare is being proactive about the details you're able to address when you're away from the doctor's office.

Keeping a running account of your conditions, medications, vaccinations, hospital admissions and surgeries will save you time and aggravation over and over. And maybe it could even save your life! This document becomes invaluable if you are traveling and find the need to seek medical care. Or if you're admitted to the hospital and aren't able to speak for yourself. Or even if you are. I speak from years of experience when I tell you this – having your entire medical and surgical history as well as a list of your up-to-date current medications all in one place makes it so much easier for nurses to get you admitted quickly. They'll thank you for your organizational prowess!

There are many available options today for gathering your data in one place, and it can be stored in myriad ways. Technology has given us more options than we know what to do with! Just a few of the avenues I've seen for storing medical info: pc/mac software, smartphone apps, internet database URLs, good ol' hardcopy in a file cabinet, your healthcare provider's parent company website...it's mind-boggling. When many of these options were brand new and just being rolled out, I admit to being enamored of their novelty. But as identity theft and HIPAA enforcement became more than just occasional mentions on the local and national news, I began to rethink my position on some of these. You may want to do the same. I'll address my concerns in a future post.

A great place to start is to just get it all down on paper. One of my personal favorite websites for this topic is www.myPHR.Com (I'm not affiliated with them in any way). This site is chock full of information and resources regarding personal health records. You can find templates to use for getting it all on paper here: <http://www.myphr.com/resources/choose.aspx>. They're available in Word document form or PDF, and in English or Spanish.

The purpose of today's post is just to get you thinking about your personal health record. Whether you need to create one from scratch or just need to update what you have already, this should be enough to push you in the right direction. Later I'll post more information regarding the many choices available for creating and storing this information – as mentioned above. In the meantime, get cracking!

Be healthy!